



MUGA PROJECT

COUNTERING INFORMATION THREATS IN MOLDOVA,
UKRAINE, GEORGIA AND ARMENIA

Information environment research:

UKRAINE

INFO OPS
POLSKA



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MUGA Project

Research on information environment: UKRAINE

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MUGA
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**Ministerstwo
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Introduction

In recent years, Ukraine has become an arena of intense information struggles resulting from both internal conditions and external geopolitical pressure. The country's strategic location between the West and Russia and the ongoing military operations in the eastern regions of Ukraine since 2014 have contributed to the intensification of the activity of entities using disinformation, propaganda and manipulation to shape public opinion. In this context, both traditional media (state and private) and modern communication channels (social media, blogs, Internet channels) constitute a space for conducting narratives favorable to specific interest groups or political forces. The scale and multithreading of these activities highlight the need for a thorough analysis of Ukraine's information environment in order to identify the main threats to the stability and information security of the country, as well as to assess society's susceptibility to manipulation. The background of political, social and military events in Ukraine – from Euromaidan (2013–2014), through the annexation of Crimea, to the armed conflict in Donbas and subsequent escalations – has a significant impact on the functioning of the media and information habits of Ukrainian citizens. There are strong internal divisions, resulting from regional, linguistic and historical differences, among others, which cause different target groups to use different, often extremely polarized sources of information. As a result, the role of entities taking active actions in the field of persuasion and exerting influence, including third countries, political forces and non-governmental organizations, is significantly increasing. This process becomes more complex as Ukraine is making efforts to achieve re-rapprochement with European institutions and other Western countries, which is an additional factor polarizing the media space and the subject of numerous manipulations.

This report will present a detailed analysis of the Ukrainian information environment, taking into account both traditional media (television, press, radio, news portals) and modern communication channels (social media, bloggers, influencers, video platforms).

First, public and private entities and initiatives created by specific political, religious or ethnic groups will be characterized. Foreign media influencing Ukrainian public opinion and hybrid media projects resulting from cooperation between different sectors will also be discussed. The following parts will present the information habits of Ukrainian society - the level of trust in state and commercial media, the influence of online media and unverified sources, as well as the role of religious traditions in shaping attitudes and opinions.

An important research aspect is the identification of key FIMI resources (companies, non-governmental organizations, opinion leaders, religious leaders and political leaders, and finally the media) that actively participate in creating the message. Their goals, mechanisms of influence and how they contribute to strengthening or weakening the information stability of Ukraine will be analyzed. The report also includes an assessment of selected manipulation techniques, tactics and linguistic tools used by entities conducting propaganda, disinformation and psychological activities. Tracing specific persuasion mechanisms helps to understand the processes to which Ukrainian society and institutions are subjected.

The study will pay special attention to identified propaganda activities aimed at the perception of the West, democratic values and Poland. The examples provided illustrate the scope and scale of interference in the information sphere, and allow for the detection of certain patterns – both in externally motivated narratives and those initiated from within the country. The case studies serve to bring closer the real threats and requirements faced by Ukrainian institutions and international partners striving to ensure the stability of the region.

The aim of the report is to present the characteristics and dynamics of the Ukrainian information environment in a multi-faceted manner. On the one hand, the report provides support in recognizing the current challenges and threats related to the spread of false content and manipulative narratives. On the other hand, it provides knowledge on the most influential media and other entities that shape the public debate. The conclusions and recommendations included in the final part of the study are intended to facilitate the

planning of information strategies, training and educational activities in the field of counteracting disinformation. Initiatives undertaken to develop media education, academic and military cooperation, as well as strengthen the competences of public institutions and non-governmental organizations are key elements supporting efforts to maintain information security in Ukraine.

By taking into account political, social, religious and economic factors, it is possible to better understand the processes shaping the Ukrainian infosphere. The comprehensive conclusions from the report will contribute to a deeper reflection on the role of propaganda and manipulation in shaping public opinion, and will also indicate the directions of actions to strengthen the resistance of both the state and society as a whole to harmful external influences. Ultimately, the pursuit of creating an aware recipient of information impacts directly the possibility of more effective defense against disinformation campaigns, and thus influences the strengthening the stability and integrity of Ukraine in the changing international environment.

1. Information environment – characteristics

The outbreak of a full-scale war on February 24, 2022, initiated by the Russian Federation, revolutionized the socio-political life of Ukraine. The armed conflict highlighted the key problems of the country's media system, especially in the context of ownership links and the influence of oligarchs on the media sector. The Ukrainian information space has for years been largely controlled by private groups belonging to the country's wealthiest businessmen, which is unique in Eastern Europe. From the perspective of the war, analyzing these connections gains significance, as private media played an important role in shaping the war narrative and building social resistance to aggression.

The most important media owners include Ihor Kolomoisky (1+1 Group), Dmytro Firtash (Inter Media Group), Rinat Akhmetov (Media Grupa Ukraine) and Viktor Pinchuk (Starlight Media). Their media empires shaped public opinion in the country, while also serving

as tools for political and economic expansion. Each of these oligarchs, although with varying degrees of involvement, played a significant role in the Ukrainian media system, which had consequences both before and after the outbreak of the war.

Media ownership structure

The Ukrainian media market is characterized by the dominance of private broadcasting groups over the public sector. Since the 1990s, oligarchs have controlled key television stations, often using them to advance their economic and political interests. Ihor Kolomoisky, known for his extensive involvement in the financial and energy sectors, controls the 1+1 Group, which includes TV channels such as 1+1, 2+2, and 1+1 International. Dmytro Firtash, owner of Inter Media Group, manages INTER, NTN and K1 TV channels, which feature Russian- and Ukrainian-language content. Viktor Pinchuk, associated with Starlight Media Group, controls the STB, ICTV and Novy Kanal TV channels. Rinat Akhmetov, a Donetsk oligarch, until recently owned Media Grupa Ukraine, which includes the TV channels “Ukraina” and NLO TV. Each of these media groups was of strategic importance to the oligarchs, providing a platform for promoting their economic interests and political influence. At the same time, in recent years, there has been a slow reduction in their dominance, which is associated with the introduction of reforms in the area of ownership transparency and growing social pressure on the independence of the media.

The impact of the war on the media sector

After February 24, 2022, the Ukrainian media sector faced unprecedented challenges. The introduction of a unified news program, implemented as part of TV-marathon, was aimed at consolidating the information space and counteracting Russian propaganda. Private media, previously competing for the market, were included in a common information network, which, on one hand, limited their independence, however on the other, allowed for effective information accessible for citizens concerning current situation.

The war also affected the financial situation of the oligarchs. Rinat Akhmetov announced his resignation from media ownership, submitting the licenses of his TV channels in July 2022, which sparked wide discussions about the future of the media market. Despite financial losses, Viktor Pinchuk continues to support humanitarian activities through his foundations, while Dmytro Firtash and Ihor Kolomoisky maintain their distance from the state's media policy, which raises questions about their future role. The Ukrainian media sector is strongly linked to the oligarchic ownership structure, which has shaped the information space in the country for years. However, the war has highlighted the need for changes, including strengthening public media and limiting the influence of private media groups. The process of media transformation, initiated before the war, will require further reforms towards democratization and transparency. However, the future of the oligarchs as media owners remains open, and their decisions in this matter will have a key impact on the future of the Ukrainian media system. After the anti-oligarch law came into force, it is difficult to guess who actually owns some media today and who owns them only *de jure*. The relationships can be studied, for example, using the website YouControl, however, numerous financial and ownership connections remain a secret. The report will study both official and alleged ownership relations.

1) Traditional media (TV, press, radio, web portals)

i. State-owned

Television

Suspilne (Ukrainian National Public TV and radio Company NPTRU) - a public radio and television broadcaster that serves as the main provider of independent media content in Ukraine. Established in 2017 as part of the media reform, its goal is to promote freedom of speech, independent journalism, and support Ukrainian culture and identity. Suspilne is managed by a supervisory board consisting of representatives of civil society, media experts, and members appointed by parliament and other public institutions. Thanks to this structure, the broadcaster operates independently of direct government influence.

The organization is headed by **Mykola Chernotytskyi**, who serves as the chairman of the board. Suspilne is financed from the state budget, but within the framework of a law guaranteeing the independence of the institution. The broadcaster's budget is allocated to content production, infrastructure modernization, and educational activities. The organization also seeks to obtain funding from grants and international cooperation.

Suspilne is a member of the European Broadcasting Union (**EBU**), which allows it to cooperate with international partners and participate in projects such as the Eurovision Song Contest.

UA:Pershyi is a Ukrainian state television channel that serves as the main public media outlet in Ukraine. It is managed by the Ukrainian National Public TV and radio Company, also known as Suspilne. The current CEO of Suspilne is Mykola Chernotytskyi, who has played a key role in leading the reform and modernization of Ukrainian public media. During the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the channel played a key role in providing reliable information and was part of the joint news project United News (Єдині новини), which integrated the activities of the largest Ukrainian media to provide unified and reliable coverage. Website: <https://suspilne.media/news/schedule/tv/>

Rada TV – the official television channel of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. It is a state news channel, whose mission is to provide Ukrainian citizens with reliable information about the activities of the parliament, legislative processes and other events related to the political life of the country. TV Rada plays a key role in increasing the transparency of the functioning of the Ukrainian parliament and in building citizens' trust in democratic institutions. Its activities contribute to educating society about the principles of the functioning of the political system and promoting openness in public life. Website: <https://tv.rada.gov.ua/>

Radio

Ukrainian state radio stations are part of Ukrainian National Public TV and radio Company (Suspilne) and play a key role in providing reliable information, education and promotion of Ukrainian culture. Suspilne radio system consists of several main channels with a diverse profile, which together provide a wide range of content adapted to different audiences. All Suspilne stations are available throughout Ukraine via radio transmitters, as well as online on platforms such as ukr.radio and suspilne.radio. This allows them to reach both urban residents and remote rural audiences. During the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Suspilne radio stations played a key role in informing the public about the situation on the battlefield, providing reliable news and official government announcements. They also became a platform for supporting citizens' morale, broadcasting patriotic and educational programs.

Ukrainian Radio - the oldest and main radio channel in the Suspilne system, which focuses on current events, political, social and cultural information. Programs include news, expert analysis, live coverage of domestic and international events, as well as educational and historical programs. It is broadcast throughout Ukraine and available online. Website: <https://ukr.radio/>

Radio Promień - a channel aimed at a younger and more dynamic audience. It specializes in contemporary music, entertainment and lifestyle programs. It also features educational programs and shows about popular culture. Website: <https://suspilne.radio/>

Radio Culture - a channel dedicated to culture, literature, classical music and art. Programs include shows about Ukrainian literature, classical music concerts, art discussions and interviews with artists. Website: <https://suspilne.radio/>

Radio Ukraine International - a channel aimed at foreign audiences, providing content about Ukraine in foreign languages such as English, German, Romanian and Polish. It aims to promote Ukrainian culture, history and current situation abroad. Website: <https://suspilne.radio/>

Press

Uriadovyi Kurier is the official government newspaper of Ukraine, published by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Its main purpose is to disseminate official government communications, including legal acts, regulations, presidential decisions and parliamentary resolutions. The newspaper plays a key role in providing citizens with information on the activities of the state administration, ensuring the transparency of legislative and government processes. Thanks to this, Uriadovyi Kurier is an indispensable tool for communication between the authorities and society. Website: <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/>

Holos Ukrayiny - the official press authority of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and Ukrainian parliament. The publication focuses on reporting on the work of parliamentarians, including draft laws, resolutions and decisions adopted by Verkhovna Rada. Published directly by the parliament, the newspaper is tasked with informing the public about legislative activities and building civic awareness of the functioning of democratic institutions. Holos Ukrayiny plays an important role in shaping the transparency of parliamentarians' activities and involving citizens in decision-making processes. Website: <https://www.golos.com.ua/>

Key Internet portals

Ukrinform - the national news agency of Ukraine (more in the section on press agencies). Website: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/>

Suspilne - a state public institution that manages Ukrainian public media, including television and radio. Suspilne also runs an Internet portal that serves as a news service. The portal provides news on politics, society, culture, education and international relations. It plays an important role in informing citizens and counteracting disinformation. Website: <https://suspilne.media/>

Kmu.gov.ua - the official government portal of Ukraine managed by the Council of Ministers of Ukraine. The portal publishes news about government decisions, public administration activities and the most important national events. Website: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/>

ii. Private

Televisions

1+1 - during the 2004 presidential elections, the 1+1 channel was heavily criticized for manipulating information in favor of **Viktor Yanukovych**, then Prime Minister of Ukraine. This took place in the context of extensive pressure on the media by the administration of President **Leonid Kuchma**. Critics accused the channel of ties to the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine, which further undermined its credibility. In response to this pressure, in late November 2004, a group of journalists left the channel, and leading presenters refused to cover news, which became one of the symbols of media resistance during the Orange Revolution.

In 2006, there were changes in the ownership structure of the channel. **Ihor Kolomoisky**, an oligarch and one of the most influential figures in Ukraine, acquired 70% of the company's shares after a legal dispute with **Alexander Rodnyansky**, then the general producer of Studio 1+1. Kolomoisky, who still owns the channel through the 1+1 Media Group, is known for his controversial business and political activities.

On New Year's Eve 2014-2015, the channel aired a program featuring Russian artist Oleg Gazmanov, known for publicly supporting Russia's actions in Crimea and Donbas in 2014. This sparked outrage in Ukrainian society and sparked an investigation by the Ukrainian National Television and Radio Council into possible violations of broadcasting regulations.

The channel's role in the 2019 presidential election was particularly controversial. **Volodymyr Zelensky** was a co-founder and content creator at **Kvartal 95 Studio**, a production company responsible for many popular shows and comedy series, including *Servant of the People* (Ukrainian: *Слуга народу*). The series, in which Zelensky played the main role, was broadcasted on 1+1 and gained huge popularity in Ukraine. 1+1 regularly broadcasted programs and series produced by Kvartal 95, which naturally associated Zelensky with the channel as an artist and producer. During the presidential campaign in 2019, the 1+1 channel was accused of supporting Zelensky, what was associated with the owner of the channel, oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky. An example was the broadcast of Zelensky's New Year's address on New Year's Eve of 2018, which replaced the traditional speech of President Petro Poroshenko. Critics emphasized that the 1+1 channel could promote Zelensky's candidacy, what was seen as an example of Kolomoisky's influence on the media in order to pursue his own political and economic interests. After winning the elections, Zelensky repeatedly emphasized his independence from Kolomoisky. Website: <https://1plus1.ua/>

Inter TV – one of the largest and oldest TV channels in Ukraine. Its original owners were Ukrainian businessmen, including **Valery Khoroshkovsky**, who later became a prominent figure in Ukrainian business and politics. In 2013, Khoroshkovsky sold his shares to a group of companies associated with **Dmytro Firtash**, a Ukrainian oligarch with wide political and economic influence. Currently, the majority owner of the channel is **Inter Media Group**, which belongs to Firtash and is managed by people from his inner circle, including **Serhiy Lvovich**. Inter has been criticized for years for its ties to Ukrainian oligarchs and pro-Russian influence.

The channel is accused of favoring pro-Russian narratives, which was especially visible after the conflict in eastern Ukraine began in 2014. During the war in Donbas, Inter was repeatedly accused of broadcasting propaganda programs, which led to numerous protests in front of its headquarters in Kyiv. Additionally, on the night of December 31, 2014 during the New Year's celebrations, the channel aired the program "Wait for Me on New Year's Day" (Russian: «Жди меня в Новый год») with the participation of Russian

artists, who publicly supported the occupation of Crimea by Russia, such as **Joseph Kobzon**, **Oleg Gazmanov** and **Valeriya**. Website: <https://inter.ua/ua>

Ukraine and Ukraine 24 - channels are currently not functioning, previously belonged to **Rinat Akhmetov's SCM Group** (In July 2022, Akhmetov ended his media activity due to the entry into force of the anti-oligarch law).

ICTV – one of the main commercial channels, focused on entertainment and information content. Popular programs include “Fakty” (news) and public affairs. It belongs to **Starlight Media**, the largest media group in Ukraine, founded on November 11, 2009. Currently, the General Director is **Volodymyr Borodianskiy**. The Supervisory Board of the group is headed by **Olena Pinchuk**, the daughter of former President of Ukraine **Leonid Kuchma** and the wife of politician and oligarch **Viktor Pinchuk**. Website: <https://ictv.ua/ua/>

STB – a private television channel, launched on June 2, 1997, offering a variety of content, including entertainment, news and reality shows. It belongs to the **StarLightMedia** group, founded by **Viktor Pinchuk**, a Ukrainian businessman and son-in-law of former President **Leonid Kuchma**. **StarLightMedia** is one of the largest media groups in Ukraine, bringing together several popular TV channels. STB is available on about 85% of the territory of Ukraine, reaching all regional capitals and cities with a population of over 50 thousand. In the past, STB was controlled by **Volodymyr Sivkovych**, a Ukrainian businessman and politician who played a key role in its establishment. In 2004, the channel became the property of the **StarLightMedia** group. Currently, STB is one of the most watched channels in Ukraine, offering a wide range of entertainment and news programs. Website: <https://www.stb.ua/ua/>

My-Ukraine - a television news channel owned by **Ihor Petrenko** (de jure) and **Andriy Yermak** (de facto). The channel was founded in October 2022 and is operated by the staff of the former **Ukraine** channel (owned by **Rinat Akhmetov's SCM Group**). After the liquidation of the **Ukraine** channel, which was present on the market from 1993 until July

2022, when Akhmetov returned the licenses for all his media assets of the media group to the state. Website: <https://weukraine.tv/>

5 Kanal - the long-time owner of the station was **Petro Poroshenko**, former President of Ukraine (2014-2019). The station became famous as a source of independent reports during the Orange Revolution in 2004 and Euromaidan in 2013-2014, when it played a key role in informing the public about current events. In 2021, Petro Poroshenko sold his shares in the channel to comply with Ukrainian anti-oligarch law, which prohibited combining political activity with media ownership. The channel currently operates independently of Poroshenko, although it is seen as a platform supporting his European Solidarity party and presenting critical opinions about the current government of Ukraine. Website: <https://www.5.ua/>

Priamyi - the name "Priamyi" (from Ukrainian "Direct") refers to its format, which is characterized by a simple and open style of presenting news. Priamyi broadcasts its content on satellite, cable and online television, which allows it to reach a wide audience, including the Ukrainian diaspora. The channel's online presence includes streaming on its website, activity on social media and YouTube. Officially, Petro Poroshenko is not the owner of the channel, but Priamyi often supports his political party – European Solidarity. Priamyi plays a significant role in informing the public, especially in the context of the war with Russia. The channel presents reports from the battlefield, political analysis and educational programs on disinformation and propaganda. In the context of the current media landscape in Ukraine, where many news channels operate under the common platform “United News” (Єдині новини), Priamyi maintains independence from this project, emphasizing his critical attitude towards the authorities. Website: <https://prm.ua/>

Espresso TV – a TV channel with a news and public affairs profile. The channel was co-founded by Michał Broniatowski. Channel gained popularity due to live broadcasts covering the Euromaidan protests in 2013-2014. Espresso TV has become a symbol of the fight for freedom of speech and independent journalism during the political crisis. Espresso TV is sometimes seen as a media outlet supporting the opposition to the

presidency of Volodymyr Zelensky. Its editorial line often criticizes the actions of the authorities and emphasizes the importance of freedom of speech and transparency in public life. Initially, Espresso TV was owned by **Goldberry LLC**, 99% of which was owned by **Larysa Kniazhitskaya**, wife of **Mykola Kniazhitskyi**, a Ukrainian politician and member of Verkhovna Rada. In August 2017, there were changes in the ownership structure – **Inna Avakova**, wife of then Minister of Internal Affairs **Arsen Avakov**, acquired 40% of the company, **Arseniy Yatsenyuk**, former Prime Minister of Ukraine, acquired 30%, and the remaining 30% of the shares remained in the hands of Larysa Kniazhitskaya. In December 2017, the American company **Atmosphere Entertainment Inc.** acquired 77.5% of the shares in Goldberry LLC, becoming the majority shareholder, while Larysa Kniazhitskaya retained 22.5% of the shares. According to available information, the final beneficiary of Atmosphere Entertainment Inc. is **Ivan Zhevago**, brother of Ukrainian oligarch **Kostyantyn Zhevago**. Website: <https://espreso.tv/>.

24 Kanal - a TV channel with an information profile. It is one of the most important independent broadcasters in Ukraine, focusing on providing news from the country and the world, as well as political, social and economic analyses. The channel was founded by **Lux Company**, owned by businessmen **Andriy Sadovyi**, the current mayor of Lviv, and his wife Kateryna Kit-Sadova. The channel is headquartered in Lviv, which emphasizes its connection with western Ukraine and the specificity of this region. Due to the fact that the channel is owned by Andriy Sadovyi, it is sometimes associated with a political party Self-Help (Ukrainian: Самопоміч), which Sadovyi founded and led. During the Russian aggression against Ukraine, 24 Kanal played an important role in providing reliable information about the war, reporting on events from the battlefield and analyzing the political and economic situation. The channel is also involved in the fight against disinformation, promoting educational initiatives on media manipulation. Website: <https://24tv.ua/>

112 Ukraine – a closed television channel with a news profile. It was known for its wide reach and intensive coverage of political events, but it was controversial from the beginning. It was owned by **Taras Kozak**, who was closely associated with pro-Russian politician **Viktor Medvedchuk**. Medvedchuk, who is a crony of Vladimir Putin,

had extensive business ties with Russia, including interests in the energy sector, which additionally raised suspicions of pro-Russian influence in the channel's activities. Ukrainian authorities accused 112 Ukraine of spreading disinformation and promoting Russian propaganda, which was supposed to support the Kremlin's interests in Ukraine. In February 2021, as part of sanctions imposed by the Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council, the channel was closed and its license was revoked. The blockade also included other channels controlled by Kozak, such as ZIK and NewsOne. Website (archive): <https://web.archive.org/web/20210204130619/http://112ua.tv/>

Nash (Ukrainian: Наш) - TV channel that began broadcasting in November 2018, but currently is not functioning. It was owned by **Yevheny Murayev**, a Ukrainian politician and former member of Verkhovna Rada known for his pro-Russian views. The channel quickly became a controversial player in the Ukrainian media market, gaining a reputation for supporting narratives aligned with Russia's interests. Nash has been accused of promoting pro-Russian content since its inception, including spreading narratives justifying Russia's actions against Ukraine, such as the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbas. The channel often aired programs critical of the Ukrainian government and the West, which were seen as actions consistent with Russian propaganda. **Yevheniy Murayev**, the owner of the channel, was previously associated with the pro-Russian **Party of Regions** and its political successor - the **Opposition Bloc**. In February 2022, the Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council decided to block the channel.

Novyi Kanal - is one of the most recognizable entertainment channels in Ukraine, focusing on broadcasting entertainment programs, reality shows, series, films, and content aimed at a younger audience. The channel is part of the media conglomerate **StarLightMedia**, which is one of the largest broadcasters in Ukraine. **StarLightMedia** belongs to a group of companies associated with Ukrainian businessmen Viktor and Iryna Pinchuk. **Viktor Pinchuk**, known as one of the richest men in Ukraine, is also the son-in-law of former Ukrainian President **Leonid Kuchma**. The channel will continue broadcasting after 2022. According to the channel's official website, new episodes of shows such as "Неймовірні дуети" (Unusual Duets) and the series "Голова" (Head) were aired in 2024. Website: <https://novy.tv/ua/>

Radio stations:

Radio NV is one of the largest news and public affairs radio stations in Ukraine. The station offers programs on politics, economy, culture and society. It broadcasts analysis, expert interviews, news and discussion programs every day. Website: <https://radio.nv.ua/>

Hit FM - the most popular radio station in Ukraine, which, like RMF FM in Poland, combines music with short news services. The station offers mainly the biggest music hits, interspersed with news from the country, the world and weather forecasts. Website: <https://www.hitfm.ua/>

Lux FM - a radio station combining pop music with light news and lifestyle programs. Website: <https://lux.fm/>

Radio Era - is one of the leading radio stations providing news, political and economic analysis. Although the station has changed its format, currently it still focuses on informing the public. Website: <https://radioera.com.ua/>

Hromadske Radio - an independent Ukrainian radio station with an information and public affairs profile, founded in 2013. It broadcasts information, analytical and public affairs programs. Its content focuses on current political, social and economic events in Ukraine and the world. The station is known for its in-depth analyses, expert interviews and live coverage of important events. Thanks to its independent operating model, the radio avoids political and commercial influence, which allows it to publish content that meets high journalistic standards. In 2016-2018, the station was supported by the Education for Democracy Foundation from the funds of the Polish-Canadian Democracy Support Program and the International Solidarity Foundation. Thanks to this support, it was possible to finance broadcasts such as "Kyiv-Donbas" and "Citizen's Wave". In 2016, Hromadske Radio began cooperation with the Ukrainian Section of Polish Radio for Abroad. Website: <https://hromadske.radio/>

Radio Svoboda - Ukrainian section of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, offering news programs, analyses and reports on current events in Ukraine and the world. Available mainly online and through FM retransmissions. Website: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/>

Press:

Dilova Stolytsya (DS News) - a newspaper with a business and political profile, founded in 2001. Aimed mainly at people associated with business, finance and politics, it is one of the most important sources of economic information in Ukraine. The medium also provides in-depth political analyses that are important for decision-makers and entrepreneurs. The portal and newspaper are owned by the Ukrainian media group **Media-DK**. After the full-scale Russian invasion began in February 2022, **Dilova Stolytsya** focused on reporting on the consequences of the war on the country's economy, business, and infrastructure. Website: <https://www.dsnews.ua/ukr>

Gazeta.ua, also known as **Gazeta po-ukrainsky** - a daily newspaper with an informational and publicistic profile, founded in 2005. It is published in Ukrainian and focuses on providing current news in the field of politics, economy, culture, sports and social life. The newspaper is privately owned, and its publisher is the **Publishing House Nowa Informacja**. One of the founders and owners of this group is **Ruslan Nyzhnyk**, who plays a key role in managing and directing the publishing activities. It is one of the important players in the Ukrainian media market, especially in the daily press segment. Among its journalists and publicists are well-known figures of Ukrainian journalism, such as: **Vitaliy Portnikov** - a renowned journalist and political commentator, known for his in-depth analysis and commentary on Ukrainian politics and society; **Olena Prytula** – experienced journalist, co-founder and editor-in-chief of the online news portal **Ukraińska Pravda**, whose articles often appear in *Gazeta po-ukrainsky*; **Serhiy Rachmanin** – journalist and political analyst, known for his in-depth analysis of the political situation in Ukraine. Website: <https://gazeta.ua/>

Focus – a national weekly print magazine, which is one of the most famous and authoritative periodicals in Ukraine. The average circulation is 32,000 copies. Founded in 2006, it is part of the **Focus Media Publishing House** and for years has been providing its readers with high-quality analytical content, reports on current events, and exclusive interviews with personalities from the world of politics, economy, and culture. The weekly plays a key role in providing in-depth analysis of political, social, and economic events both in Ukraine and around the world. Website: <https://focus.ua/>

Ukrainian Week - Ukrainian-language socio-political weekly that has been providing readers with analyses of key events in Ukraine and the world since 2007. It is one of the largest independent Ukrainian-language magazines, offering both print and online versions with regularly updated news. The online version of the magazine offers a wide range of content, including articles, opinions, interviews and analyses from various fields, such as politics, society, culture, science and economics. The portal is regularly updated, providing readers with the latest information and in-depth analyses. Website: <https://tyzhden.ua/>

Main news portals:

Ukrainian Truth - one of the most famous and influential news portals in Ukraine. It focuses on news from politics, economy, society, and topics related to corruption and human rights. The portal is of key importance in the Ukrainian media landscape, especially due to its independence and courage in addressing difficult topics. The portal was founded on April 16, 2000 by journalist **Georgy Gongadze** and his associate **Olena Prytula**. From the very beginning, Ukrayinska Pravda has focused on exposing corruption and abuse of power, making it one of the most independent sources of information in Ukraine. In 2000, Gongadze was kidnapped and murdered. His body was found several weeks later in a forest near Kyiv. The case caused international outrage and exposed problems with corruption and lack of accountability in the Ukrainian political system. The murder became a symbol of the fight for freedom of speech in Ukraine. The portal is currently owned by **Dragon Capital**, one of the largest financial investors in Ukraine, led by Czech-Ukrainian businessman **Tomáš Fiala**. Website: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/>

RBK-Ukraina - Ukrainian news portal specializing in financial, economic and political news about Ukraine and the world. It was founded in 2006 as the Ukrainian branch of the Russian news agency **RosBiznesKonsalting (RBK)**. The Ukrainian branch is owned by **Josyp Pintus**. After the start of the Russian full-scale invasion in February 2022, RBK-Ukraine continued its activities, providing up-to-date information on the conflict, political and economic situation in the country. The portal became one of the key sources of news for Ukrainian audiences, reporting on events from the battlefield, government decisions and international reactions to Russia's aggression. Independence from Russia: In 2010, the agency left the structures of the Russian holding, and in 2015 it came fully under the control of Ukrainian entrepreneur **Josyp Pintus**. Since April 2014, RBK-Ukraine has declared full independence from Russian structures. In January 2016, the Russian holding RBK tried to legally challenge the use of the RBK brand by the Ukrainian agency, but the case ended in failure for the Russian side. In the same month, the Russian media regulator **Roskomnadzor** blocked access to the RBK-Ukraine website in Russia, accusing it of publishing "extremist materials". Website: <https://www.rbc.ua/>

Delo.ua - Ukrainian internet portal with a business profile, founded in 2005 as the first independent daily business newspaper in Ukraine. Initially, it operated as a printed newspaper, but over time it moved its activities fully to the Internet, becoming one of the leading sources of economic information in the country. In December 2022, **Tetiana Snopko**, a Ukrainian entrepreneur previously associated with **Maksym Poliakov's** Noosphere, became the owner of Delo.ua. This acquisition was part of Snopko's broader investment strategy in Ukrainian online media. Delo.ua focuses on providing up-to-date information in the field of economics, finance, business and politics. It publishes market analyses, economic reports, interviews with key figures in the business world and expert commentary. Website: <https://delo.ua/>

LigaBusinessInform - Ukrainian portal founded in 2005 by **Alesya Chemerys**. Funded by the Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF), a non-profit organization supporting independent media worldwide. It provides up-to-date news in business, politics, technology and other areas. In the face of the ongoing conflict with Russia,

LigaBusinessInform has adjusted its content, focusing on reliable information about the situation in the country, military operations and the impact of the conflict on the economy and society. Website: <https://www.liga.net/ua>

Novynarnia - Ukrainian independent news portal founded in January 2016 by **Dmytro Lykhovyi**, who was the chief editor. The portal focuses on topics related to the war with Russian occupiers, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, veterans, life on the front lines, and key issues of politics, security, culture and national identity. In November 2023, Dmytro Lykhovyi was mobilized into the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and **Lesya Shovkun** took over as chief editor. Novynarnia has its own YouTube channel, where it publishes materials related to the topics discussed on the portal. Website: <https://novynarnia.com/>

Censor.NET - a news portal with a socio-political profile, founded in 2004 by journalist **Yuri Butusov**, who serves as editor-in-chief and is considered the probable owner of the portal. Since the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, and especially after the full-scale invasion in 2022, Censor.NET has taken an unequivocally critical stance towards Russia's actions. The portal actively reports on the course of the conflict, exposes war crimes committed by Russian forces, and supports Ukrainian efforts to defend sovereignty and territorial integrity. Publications on the portal often emphasize the heroism of Ukrainian soldiers and society in the face of Russian aggression. Censor.NET is one of the most popular Ukrainian news portals, playing a significant role in shaping public opinion and providing reliable information during the war. Website: <https://censor.net/>

Glavcom - a news portal that provides news on politics, economy, society and culture. It was founded in 2008 and has since become one of the valued sources of information in Ukraine. It is run by the Ukrainian media company, owned by **Viktor Shlynczak**. Shlynczak is a well-known Ukrainian journalist and social activist, involved in promoting freedom of speech and media independence in Ukraine. Glavcom takes a position supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The portal publishes content critical of Russia's actions, reporting on human rights violations, war crimes and other aspects of Russian aggression. It works to inform society about the realities of the

war, supporting the Ukrainian armed forces and emphasizing the importance of national unity in the face of threats. Website: <https://glavcom.ua/>

Dzerkalo Tyzhnia is one of the most influential Ukrainian analytical media, which plays a key role in shaping public opinion. Founded in 1994 by journalist Volodymyr Mostovyi and his associates, it initially operated as a printed newspaper. In 2020, the medium moved its activities to the Internet, completely abandoning the paper version and becoming an online portal. The portal specializes in publishing news, analyses and commentary on domestic and international politics, the economy, social reforms and the fight against corruption. Its mission is to promote transparency in public life and provide in-depth information that helps understand key events in Ukraine and the world. Dzerkalo Tyzhnia enjoys a reputation as an independent medium, which allows the editorial staff to criticize both the Ukrainian authorities and international politics, while maintaining objectivity in its analyses. The portal cooperates with a number of journalists and experts who enrich public debate in Ukraine with their work. Website: <https://zn.ua/>

Kyiv Post – was the oldest English-language newspaper in Ukraine. Initially, it served as a medium aimed primarily at the international community in Kyiv, offering news on politics, business and culture. In November 2021, the newspaper's activities were temporarily suspended, and a team of 50 journalists lost their jobs as a result of a dispute over the independence and autonomy of the editorial office. Some of them founded a new medium – The Kyiv Independent. After a short break, Kyiv Post resumed its work under the leadership of a new editorial team, with **Bohdan Nahajlo** as editor-in-chief. It currently operates exclusively as a digital medium, providing news and analysis via its website. After the beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Kyiv Post played a key role in informing the international community about the events in Ukraine. With its publications in English it has become a key source of information for international readers, providing up-to-date news, analysis, and reporting from the frontlines. Website: <https://www.kyivpost.com/>

The Kyiv Independent is an English-language Ukrainian news portal founded in November 2021 by former Kyiv Post employees who left the editorial office following

disputes over editorial independence. The portal focuses on providing reliable information on politics, economy, culture, and security issues in Ukraine and the Eastern European region. With its English-language publications, The Kyiv Independent serves as an information bridge between Ukraine and the international community, contributing to a better understanding of the situation in the region. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, The Kyiv Independent became a key source of information for a global audience, providing up-to-date news, analysis, and reporting from the frontlines. Its editorial independence and commitment to reliable journalism have earned it recognition both at home and abroad. The editor-in-chief of the portal, **Olga Rudenko**, was featured on the cover of Time magazine in May 2022, underlining the importance of The Kyiv Independent in the international media landscape. Website: <https://kyivindependent.com/>

iii. Regional

Television:

Public television

Operates within **Suspilne** (Ukrainian Public Broadcasting Corporation) and includes regional branches of public television in each region. Each branch creates content tailored to the specifics of the region, taking into account local events, social initiatives and cultural issues. In the face of the ongoing armed conflict and the challenges associated with it, some of these branches had to adapt their activities to new conditions.

Suspilne Kyiv: <https://suspilne.media/kyiv/>

Suspilne Lviv: <https://suspilne.media/lviv/>

Suspilne Dnipro: <https://suspilne.media/dnipro/>

Suspilne Kharkiv: <https://suspilne.media/kharkiv/>

Suspilne Lutsk: <https://suspilne.media/lutsk/>

Suspilne Rivne: <https://suspilne.media/rivne/>

Suspilne Ivano-Frankivsk: <https://suspilne.media/ivano-frankivsk/>

Suspilne Chernivtsi: <https://suspilne.media/chernivtsi/>

Suspilne Uzhhorod (Transcarpathia): <https://suspilne.media/uzhhorod/>

Suspilne Vinnytsia: <https://suspilne.media/vinnytsia/>

Suspilne Zhytomyr: <https://suspilne.media/zhytomyr/>

Suspilne Kropyvnytskyi: <https://suspilne.media/kropyvnytskyi/>

Suspilne Mykolaiv: <https://suspilne.media/mykolaiv/>

Suspilne Odessa: <https://suspilne.media/odesa/>

Suspilne Kherson: <https://suspilne.media/kherson/>

Suspilne Zaporizhia: <https://suspilne.media/zaporizhzhia/>

Suspilne Donbas: <https://suspilne.media/donbas/>

Suspilne Krym is a Ukrainian public television channel that broadcasts 24 hours a day in Ukrainian, Russian, and Crimean Tatar. Its mission is to provide reliable information and promote culture and national identity, especially in the context of the situation in Crimea. Suspilne Krym is a key tool in countering Russian propaganda and maintaining communication with the people of Crimea, but it operates in a limited form due to the loss of control over the local media infrastructure. Supporting online and satellite activities remains a priority to ensure access to reliable information.

Website: <https://suspilne.media/crimea/>

Suspilne Poltava: <https://suspilne.media/poltava/>

Suspilne Sumy: <https://suspilne.media/sumy/>

Suspilne Ternopil: <https://suspilne.media/ternopil/>

Suspilne Khmelnytskyi: <https://suspilne.media/khmelnytskyi/>

Suspilne Cherkasy: <https://suspilne.media/cherkasy/>

Suspilne Chernihiv: <https://suspilne.media/chernihiv/>

Suspilne Luhansk: <https://suspilne.media/regions/luhansk-region/>

Private television stations

12 Kanal - regional television channel based in Lutsk (Volyn), Ukraine.

Website: <https://12kanal.com/pro-nas/>

7 Kanal - regional television channel based in Odessa, Ukraine.

Website: <https://7kanal.com.ua/>

TV-4 - regional television channel based in Ternopil.

Website: <https://tv4.te.ua/>

Chernivtsi TV - local television channel based in Chernivtsi, focusing on providing news, current affairs programs, and coverage of cultural and social events in the region.

Website: <https://www.youtube.com/@ChernivtsiLive>

Vikka TV - regional television channel based in Cherkasy.

Website: <https://www.vikka.ua/>

Dnipro TV - city and regional television station based in Dnipro.

Website: <https://dnipro.tv/>

Radio Stations:

UH Radio - a local radio station broadcasting from Ternopil on the frequency of 101.1 FM.

Founded on December 20, 1998, it became the first local radio station in the city. Website:

<https://uhradio.ua/>

Radio Wieża (Tower) - a radio station in Ivano-Frankivsk, broadcasting on the frequency of 107.0 FM. The station offers a variety of information, cultural and music programs, aimed at an adult, intelligent and pro-European audience. Website:

<https://www.vezha.org/radio2/>

Світ FM - a local radio station broadcasting from Uzhhorod on the frequency of 104.7 FM. It began regular broadcasting on June 10, 2002 and became one of the first radio stations in the Zakarpattia region. FB profile: <https://www.facebook.com/radiosvitfm>

Regional press:

Prykarpatska Pravda - is an example of a regional state newspaper, published in the western part of Ukraine. The publication focuses on local events, informing residents about the activities of the regional administration, social initiatives and cultural and political events in the region. The newspaper acts as a medium connecting local communities with the administration, promoting cooperation between the authorities and citizens. Website: <https://pravda.if.ua/>

Vysokyi Zamok - a Ukrainian daily newspaper with an information and journalistic profile, whose history dates back to 1991. Its name refers to the High Castle, a historical fortification in Lviv, which emphasizes its regional roots and connection with western Ukraine. It is one of the most popular media in the Lviv region, known for the variety of topics it covers and the quality of its published content. It operates in both printed and online form. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, Vysokyi Zamok focused its attention on reporting on war-related events, the impact of the conflict on the daily lives of citizens, and international activities supporting Ukraine. The newspaper plays an important role in countering disinformation and promoting patriotic values, providing reliable information and promoting Ukrainian national identity. Website: <https://wz.lviv.ua/>

Zbruch - an information and cultural website focusing on political, social, and cultural events in Western Ukraine. The portal is known for its deep commitment to promoting Ukrainian culture and analyzing current socio-political events. The authors collaborating with the **Zbruch** portal who have made a significant contribution to Ukrainian culture include **Yuri Andrukhovych, Sofiya Andrukhovych, Yuri Vynnychuk, Taras Prokhashko,**

and Yaroslav Hrytsak. During the war, the portal focuses on documenting the activities of local communities in Western Ukraine, which played an important role in accepting refugees and organizing humanitarian aid. Website: <https://zbruc.eu/>

Expres - a Ukrainian daily newspaper with an informational and journalistic profile, founded in 1992 and published in Ukrainian. It is headquartered in Lviv, and its coverage covers mainly Western Ukraine, although it is also available in other regions of the country. It is privately owned and its editor-in-chief is **Ihor Pochinok**. Expres has its own publishing complex "Mandaryn", located near Lviv, which allows for independence in the printing and distribution process. In 2010-2013, Expres was the subject of intimidation by the Ukrainian judicial system and police, which was reported by both the newspaper's employees and the **IFEX** organization (International Freedom of Speech Network). In February 2012, the International Press Institute publicly condemned alleged attempts by local officials to "shut up" the Expres editorial office. These allegations included actions that were intended to limit the newspaper's independence, including administrative pressure and possible use of the judicial system to exert pressure. In August 2013, the Ministry of Revenues and Customs officially denied the accusations, but this did not end the controversy surrounding the alleged attempts to limit the newspaper's activities. The situation was particularly tense in 2009, when three shots were fired at the Expres editorial office, raising concerns about the safety of journalists and intensifying accusations of attempts to intimidate independent media. These events reinforced the newspaper's image as a media outlet opposed to political influence and corruption. The newspaper is distributed in various regions of Ukraine with regional inserts. Website: <https://expres.online/>

Khreshchatyk (Ukrainian: Хрещатик) - a regional newspaper and news portal, an official publication of the Kyiv City Council. The publication focuses on events and topics related to the life of the capital of Ukraine, such as the activities of city authorities, social projects, cultural events and other aspects of life in Kyiv. Website: <https://khreshchatyk.kyiv.ua/>

Note: there is a similar portal that is not associated with the City Council and does not publish a newspaper: <https://kreschatic.kiev.ua/>

Ukraina-Centrum - a weekly newspaper published in Kropyvnytskyi, the capital of the Kirovohrad Oblast in Ukraine. The newspaper has existed since December 24, 1993 and focuses on reporting on events in the region, but is also available throughout Ukraine by subscription. In 2010, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in favor of the newspaper in a case concerning an article accusing the candidate for the President of Kropyvnytskyi of ordering the murder of a journalist. The ruling emphasized the media's right to report on public affairs. The newspaper's portal contains information on war operations, aid for combatants and veterans, and mobilization materials. Website: <https://uc.kr.ua/>

Peremoha - an independent newspaper (weekly) published in Krasnopillia, Sumy Oblast, Ukraine. Founded on February 23, 1932, it plays an important role in informing the local community, especially in the context of the ongoing conflict with Russia. The newspaper is published once a week, usually having about eight pages. In May 2024, the editorial staff consisted of four people, headed by editor-in-chief **Oleksandr Mocny**, who joined the team in 1995 and has been editor-in-chief since 2017. The day before the planned 90th anniversary, on February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Krasnopillia, located 15 km from the Russian border, was occupied. During this time, the newspaper's publication was suspended and its employees hid important documents from marauding Russian soldiers. After the region was liberated by Ukrainian forces in April 2022, Peremoha resumed its work in a smaller format and in black and white version, focusing on reporting on the war and the fate of local soldiers. Peremoha plays a key role in documenting the return of Ukrainian prisoners of war through the only open border crossing with Russia, located near Krasnopillia. The newspaper publishes their names and stories, ensuring that they are not forgotten. Journalists often engage in community outreach, preferring it to immediate reporting of events.

Sample news portals:

The Odessa Journal - an English-language website founded in early 2020 by Italian entrepreneur Ugo Poletti. Initially focused on the culture, economy, and historical attractions of Odessa, aimed primarily at an English-speaking audience. After Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, the portal focused on in-depth coverage of the conflict, providing up-to-date information on the war, diplomacy, economy, culture, and society of Ukraine.

Website: <https://odessa-journal.com/>

Intent Press (Odessa) - specializes in investigative journalism on corruption and local government decisions. The editorial office, supported by **MediaFit**, has expanded its activities to the Mykolaiv and Kherson regions, also documenting the impact of the war on organized crime. With international support, Intent Press implements strategies to increase the reach and effectiveness of its activities, focusing on key problems in the region. Website: <https://intent.press/>

Lyuk Media - a media outlet from Kharkiv that focuses on telling human stories and counteracting cultural colonization in the war-torn region. With the support of international organizations such as **MediaFit**, Lyuk Media implements projects related to decommunization and changes in the city's toponymy, promoting Ukrainian identity. The team, led by **Kateryna Pereverzieva**, also runs initiatives supporting culture and civil society. Website: <https://lyuk.media/>

Vgoru (Kherson) - played a significant role in providing information to the residents of Kherson during the Russian occupation. The portal's journalists operated anonymously to avoid repression by the occupying authorities, while providing key news and reports on life in the city. After Kherson was liberated, Vgoru continued its operations, publishing detailed analyses and documentaries, such as the film "Нескорений Херсон". The portal operates thanks to the support of international projects such as USAID, which allows for the development of infrastructure and the production of content for the local community.

Website: <https://vgoru.org/>

Chas Chernihivskyi - one of the main media operating in the Chernihiv region. With the support of DW Akademie, it implements the "Time of War" project, which focuses on reporting on the bombings and documenting the everyday life of residents. The portal is active in social media, providing up-to-date news and political analysis, sometimes critical of local authorities. Collaboration with international organizations such as DW Akademie and Internews allows for further development and reaching a wider audience. Website: <https://cntime.cn.ua/>

Zaxid.net - one of the most popular news portals in Lviv, offering news from the city and region. Website: <https://zaxid.net/>

057.ua - local news portal providing news from Kharkiv and the surrounding area. Website: <https://www.057.ua/>

Dumskaya.net - news portal focusing on events in Odessa and the Odessa region. Website: <https://dumskaya.net/>

Dnepr.info - news service offering the latest news from Dnipro and Dnipropetrovsk region. Website: <https://dnepr.info/uk>

061.ua - local news portal with news from Zaporizzhya and the surrounding area. Website: <https://www.061.ua/>

Galka.if.ua - news portal providing news from Ivano-Frankivsk and the region. Website: <https://galka.if.ua/>

Rivnepost.rv.ua - news portal providing news from Rivne and the Rivne region. Website: <https://rivnepost.rv.ua/>

0542.ua - local news service with news from Sumy and the Sumy region. Website: <https://www.0542.ua/>

Vinnitsa.info - news portal providing news from Vinnytsia and the Vinnytsia region.

Website: <https://vinnitsa.info/>

A very important category is local portals and media initiatives related to the territories occupied by Russia. The war in Ukraine has particularly highlighted the role of local media in frontline regions in providing information to communities affected by the conflict. These media not only report on war events, but also document everyday life in conflict zones, support residents with information about humanitarian aid, and act as tools to counter Russian propaganda.

Vchasno (Donetsk) - a key information medium operating in Donbas that has survived despite intensive warfare and Russian occupation of part of the region. The portal, supported by initiatives such as **MediaFit**, provides information from the frontline, publishing stories of local residents and reports of everyday life in the region. The editorial team, headed by Maria Davydenko, has managed to shift some of its activities to western Ukraine while maintaining a presence in Donbas. The journalists are facing cyberattacks and financial constraints, but thanks to international support, they have improved their technical infrastructure and are developing their activities on social media, such as Telegram (<https://t.me/vchasnoua>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/watch/iavchasno/>). Website: <https://vchasnoua.com/>

Realnaya Gazeta (Luhansk) - an independent portal from Luhansk that moved its activities to the Internet as a result of the Russian occupation. The editorial team, headed by **Andriy Dikhtyarenko**, documents the situation in the occupied territories and exposes the propaganda mechanisms of pro-Russian media. With the support of **MediaFit**, the portal has developed its online channels, including YouTube, and is conducting educational activities in the field of media literacy. Realnaya Gazeta is also involved in the Occupied.media project, which provides independent information about life in the occupied territories. Website: <https://realgazeta.com.ua/>

Occupied.media - an independent media platform founded in 2024, focused on providing information from the territories occupied by Russia. The initiative was

created with the participation of **Andriy Dychtyarenko**, editor-in-chief of **Realnaya Gazeta**, and aims to document the situation in these areas, expose Russian propaganda, and provide independent coverage of the lives of local residents. Thanks to the support of international foundations and cooperation with other media, the platform has become an important source of information about the actions of the occupation authorities and everyday life in conflict zones. Occupied.media uses modern technologies, including interactive reports and multimedia, to reach audiences both in Ukraine and internationally. The platform also focuses on human rights issues, documenting violations in occupied territories. Website: <https://occupied.media/>

iv. Affiliated with specific groups (political, religious, ethnic)

Political

The Ukrainian media scene is characterized by the significant influence of oligarchs who own or control numerous media outlets, often used to promote specific political groups. TV stations are described in the section on private television, and political affiliations are also provided there. It is worth noting that in 2021, President Zelensky introduced sanctions against some media affiliated with pro-Russian politicians, which led to the closure of the channels 112 Ukraina, NewsOne, and ZIK, that were controlled by Viktor Medvedchuk. It should be emphasized that the situation in the Ukrainian media landscape is dynamic, and the affiliations between media outlets and political groups may change depending on the current political and economic situation.

Nash - created by Yevhen Murayev, a former politician with pro-Russian views. In addition to his television activities, he hosted online content promoting pro-Russian narratives. As a result of the sanctions, its activity has been restricted.

Obozrevatel.com - a portal associated with Mykola Kniashitskyi, a politician of European Solidarity (Petro Poroshenko's party). Obozrevatel often publishes content

supporting Poroshenko's group and criticizing the current government. Website: <https://www.obozrevatel.com/>

Vesti.ua - the portal was associated with people and entities that may have had political connections. The media often pointed to its alleged connections with certain oligarchs, including Viktor Medvedchuk, a politician closely associated with Russia. The financial independence of the portal may therefore raise doubts. The portal often publishes materials critical of the Ukrainian government and the pro-Western course of Kyiv's policy. At the same time, there were publications that were interpreted as favorable to the pro-Russian narrative, which led to accusations of a lack of objectivity.

Ethnic

Zorile Bucovinei (Bukovina Morning Star) is a Romanian-language newspaper published in Chernivtsi, Ukraine. It calls itself the “Newspaper of Romanians from Ukraine”. It is one of the oldest Romanian periodicals in the Chernivtsi region. On February 15, 1941, the first issue of the newspaper was published in Ukrainian. The first edition in Romanian was published on April 1, 1967. Zorile Bucovinei plays a key role in preserving and promoting Romanian culture and language in the Bukovina region, being an important source of information for the Romanian-speaking community in Ukraine. The newspaper provides the latest information on events in the Bukovina region, Ukraine, and the world. It publishes articles on the cultural heritage, traditions, and artistic events related to the Romanian community in the region. Website: <http://zorilebucovinei.com/>

BucPress - Romanian-language news portal operating in Ukraine, based in Chernivtsi. It is run by Centrul Media BucPress, an association of Romanian journalists in Ukraine, whose goal is to provide up-to-date information and promote Romanian culture and language among the Romanian-speaking community in the region. Centrul Media BucPress implements several media projects that complement the portal's activities: Radio Cernăuți: The only radio station in Ukraine broadcasting 24 hours a day in Romanian, offering music, news and cultural programs; BucPress TV: A television platform producing reports, interviews and documentaries about the life of the Romanian

community in Ukraine. The portal plays a key role in informing and integrating the Romanian-speaking community in Ukraine, providing reliable information and promoting Romanian language and culture in the region. Website: <https://bucpress.eu/>

ATR (Crimea) - the first Crimean Tatar TV channel, currently broadcasting from the territory controlled by Ukraine. Founded in 2006, the channel has become an important information and cultural medium for Crimean Tatars, as well as for a wide range of viewers interested in the situation in Crimea. After the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, ATR was forced to relocate its operations to the territory controlled by Ukraine, which significantly affected its functioning and scope of influence. Currently, ATR broadcasts from Kyiv, from where it continues its information and cultural mission. TV programs are conducted in three languages: Crimean Tatar, Ukrainian and Russian, which allows it to reach a diverse audience. ATR's financing is based mainly on grants from the Ukrainian government and the support of international organizations and partners. Website: <https://www.atr.ua/>

Radio Lviv - Polish radio station operating in Lviv, Ukraine. It is a medium focused on the Polish community living in this region and on the promotion of Polish culture, history and language in Ukraine. Website: <https://radiolwow.org/>

Kurier Galicyjski - published twice a week in Lviv, aimed at the Polish community in Ukraine, covering cultural, social and historical topics. Website: <https://kuriergalicyjski.com/>

Monitor Wołyński - Polish-language news portal and magazine published twice a week, based in Lutsk, focusing on the lives of Poles in Volhynia and Polish-Ukrainian relations. Website: <https://monitorwolynski.com/pl>

Kárpáti Igaz Szó - daily newspaper published in Hungarian, addressed to the Hungarian minority living in Transcarpathia. Website: <https://kiszoz.net/>

Hadashot - news portal addressed to the Jewish community in Ukraine, publishing news in Russian and Ukrainian. This is a printed newspaper of the Vaad of Ukraine, published since January 1991, being one of the oldest Jewish newspapers in the former USSR. However, as we read on the website: "The publication of the Hadashot newspaper has been temporarily suspended due to the Russian-Ukrainian war. We will definitely return after the victory." The Vaad of Ukraine, or the Ukrainian Jewish Union, is an umbrella organization that brings together various Jewish communities, institutions, and organizations in Ukraine. The Vaad of Ukraine cooperates with global Jewish organizations such as the World Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which strengthens its international position. Website: <http://www.hadashot.kiev.ua/>

JewishNews - an information portal devoted to the life of the Jewish community in Ukraine, publishing news, analyses, and articles related to culture, history, and current events concerning Jews in Ukraine and around the world. It is published by United Jewish Community in Ukraine, is an organization whose goal is the revival and development of Jewish life in Ukraine, as well as the integration and support of Jewish communities in the country. Website: <https://jewishnews.com.ua/>

Religious

There are many media in Ukraine associated with various religious groups, which play an important role in the spiritual and informational life of society.

Catholic media:

EWTN Ukraine - international catholic television channel, also present in Ukraine, offering religious programs, prayers, and educational content. Website: <https://ewtn.org.ua/>

Zhyve Telebachennya - Greek Catholic television channel, focusing on broadcasting liturgies, spiritual and educational programs. Website: <https://zhyve.tv/>

Credo.pro - popular internet portal based in Vinnytsia, providing religious news, theological articles and information about the life of the Catholic Church in Ukraine.

Website: <https://credo.pro/>

Orthodox media:

Religious Truth - the portal is not an official media of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, but the portal often publishes content consistent with the narrative of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. It promotes the independence of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, supports the activities of Epiphanius, and openly criticizes the pro-Russian activities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP). The portal has a section dedicated to Russian Manipulations in Orthodoxy, which focuses on exposing and analyzing Russia's actions in the religious sphere in Ukraine and in the global context. This section aims to inform about Russia's use of religion as a tool of propaganda and geopolitical influence, especially in the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine. Website: <https://religionpravda.com.ua/>

Orthodox Ukraine - Ukrainian news portal dedicated to Orthodox topics, providing news, analysis and articles related to religious life in Ukraine and the world. Website: <https://uaorthodox.com/en/>

Orthodox Ukraine - official news portal of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), providing news, theological articles and information about church life in Ukraine. Website: <http://pravoslavye.org.ua/>

Pomisna.info - the official information portal of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCC), which was established in 2018 after receiving autocephaly from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople. The portal is the main tool for communication of the OCC with believers, media and society. Website: <https://www.pomisna.info/uk/>

Church.ua - the official website of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which remains under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. The website acts as the main tool for communication of the OCC, providing information about the activities of the Church, its structure, religious events and official positions. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (OCC-MP) has been repeatedly criticized for its alleged ties with Russia, especially after the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The Church.ua presents the position of the Church, which emphasizes its autonomy and distinctiveness from the Russian Orthodox Church, although these claims are disputed by some Ukrainian society. Website: <https://church.ua/>

Patriarchia.org.ua - the official website of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Tserkva (UAOT). Website: <https://patriarchia.org.ua/>

Note: There are four main Orthodox religious communities in Ukraine, each with its own information portal, reflecting the divisions in the country's religious landscape and complex external relations. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) and its website pravoslavie.org.ua are associated with a traditional church with pro-Russian roots, which is controversial in the context of the Russian invasion. The Orthodox Church of Ukraine (UOC), represented by pomisna.info, was established in 2018 after receiving autocephaly from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, symbolizing a desire for independence from Russia. In contrast, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), supported by church.ua, remains under Moscow's jurisdiction, which has caused tensions and accusations of supporting Russian interests, especially in times of war. In turn, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), whose activities are presented by patriarchia.org.ua, remains a minority community, but also seeks to strengthen Ukrainian religious identity. The multiplicity of Orthodox churches in Ukraine reflects historical and political divisions, which are further deepened by external influences, including Russia and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which complicates the situation and makes it difficult to build religious unity in the country.

Protestant media:

Hope Channel Ukraine - an adventist television channel, also known as Телеканал Надія, offering religious, health, and educational programs aimed at a wide audience. The publisher is Hope Channel International, Inc., a subsidiary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Website: <https://tv.hope.ua/>

Radio Emmanuel - radio station associated with the Protestant community Emmanuel, broadcasting spiritual programs, Christian music, and educational broadcasts. Radio Emmanuel is ecumenical, which means that it is not directly associated with one Christian denomination. However, there is no detailed information about the origin, mission, and financing of this project. Website: <https://svitle.org/>

Muslim media:

ATR - the first Crimean Tatar television channel promoting Muslim culture and traditions, currently broadcasting from territory controlled by Ukraine. Website: <https://www.atr.ua/>

Islam in Ukraine - Internet portal dedicated to the life of Muslims in Ukraine, offering news, theological articles, and information about Islamic culture and traditions. The portal is associated with the **Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine** (ДУМУ, DUMU) and the organization "**Alraid**" (in 1997 the organization was registered under the name "Arraid" (<https://www.muslims.in.ua/ru>), which is a more correct transcription from Arabic), the largest Islamic social organization in Ukraine. This is an initiative aimed at informing about the life of the Muslim community in Ukraine, educating society about Islam, and promoting intercultural dialogue. The portal is associated with the Sunni branch of Islam, which is dominant in Ukraine among Muslims. "Alraid" and DUMU are often supported by international Islamic organizations, mainly from Middle Eastern countries such as Turkey, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. This cooperation includes issues of education, humanitarian aid, and the promotion of Islam. DUMU is headed by **Mufti Said Ismagilov**, who serves as the spiritual leader of Muslims in Ukraine. Website: <https://islam.in.ua/ua>

Umma TV - Internet television channel run by the Spiritual Boards of Muslims of Ukraine, offering educational, religious and cultural programs related to Islam. Website: <https://umma.in.ua/ua>

v. Foreign

RT (Russia Today) - a television channel and digital platform, available in many languages, strongly involved in reporting from Ukraine.

In connection with the sanctions imposed on RT, it is necessary to explain how they are circumvented: The Russian propaganda channel RT (Russia Today), covered by Western sanctions, has developed effective mechanisms to bypass restrictions that allow it to continue to reach audiences in Europe. Although formal blockades have limited traffic to RT's main pages, Russian technological and adaptation measures allow the propagation of pro-Russian narratives almost undisturbed.

The basic method of implementing sanctions in Europe is a block at the DNS (Domain Name System) level. It consists of preventing access to specific Internet addresses by modifying their entries in DNS systems. However, this mechanism is easy to bypass by users who can change the DNS servers on their devices using publicly available tools, such as Google DNS or OpenDNS. Such a change allows to bypass the blocks imposed by Internet service providers as part of national regulations. Another problem is the limited effectiveness of IP-level blocks, which can be bypassed by transferring content to new servers.

A key element of the RT strategy is the creation of so-called mirror sites, or copies of original websites available under different domains. Russia has registered dozens of new addresses that look almost identical to the original rt.com website, but are hosted on different servers. This means that even if one address is blocked, RT content remains available under other domains. This procedure is dynamic – as more sites are blocked,

new ones appear, which resembles a “cat and mouse game” between content creators and European regulators.

Although sanctions have limited the availability of RT, Europeans can still access Russian narratives through alternative domains and social media links promoted by “pro-Russian opinion leaders”. RT content is regularly shared by accounts and groups on platforms such as Telegram, which allows them to bypass formal bans. Analyses indicate that these activities make it difficult to effectively enforce sanctions and limit their impact on eliminating Russian disinformation in Europe.

This problem has been widely documented in reports by organizations such as Reporters Without Borders and in academic studies. Despite sanctions, RT continues to successfully spread its content, which poses a challenge to European strategies to combat disinformation. This practice indicates the need for more comprehensive solutions that will be able to effectively limit the possibilities of bypassing restrictions by entities subject to sanctions.

Sputnik - an internet portal and radio station, intensively involved in Russian propaganda narratives - <https://sputnikglobe.com/>

Novoe.Media - a Russian information platform focused on Ukraine, on their website you can select a given region of Ukraine and follow Russian news - <https://novoe.media/>

Mash - <https://mash.ru/>

Pravda - <https://news-pravda.com/>

Gazeta.ru; Lenta.ru – <https://www.gazeta.ru/> , <https://lenta.ru/>

Readovka – <https://readovka.news/>

RIA Novosti – Russian news agency distributing propaganda content about Ukraine
- <https://ria.ru>

Izvestia, Kommersant, Komsomolskaya Pravda (<https://iz.ru/>, <https://www.kommersant.ru/>, <https://kp.ru/>) – widely cited in Ukrainian Russian-language internet spaces.

Channel One Russia (Первый канал) and **Russia-24** – TV channels broadcasting Russian news also outside Russia. <https://www.1tv.ru/> and <https://www.vesti.ru/>

Polish Radio (including Radio East) – Polish narrative aimed at audiences in the East.
<https://www.polskieradio.pl/398>

Belsat TV – a channel aimed mainly at Belarus, but with Ukrainian content and about Ukraine. <https://belsat.eu/>

Gazeta Wyborcza, Rzeczpospolita, Onet – Polish media publishing analyses in English and Russian, reaching Ukrainian elites. <https://wyborcza.pl/>, <https://www.rp.pl/>, <https://www.onet.pl/>

Voice of America – editions in Ukrainian and Russian. <https://www.voanews.com/>

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) – is active in Ukraine through programs and websites in Ukrainian and Russian - <https://www.rferl.org/>

CNN, The New York Times, The Washington Post – quoted and translated in Ukrainian media - <https://edition.cnn.com/>, <https://www.nytimes.com/>, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>

Bloomberg, Reuters, AP – news agencies whose content is widely distributed in Ukraine
- <https://www.bloomberg.com/europe>, <https://www.reuters.com/>, <https://apnews.com/>

BBC Ukrainian – Ukrainian-language section of the BBC with news and analysis.

<https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian>

The Guardian, The Financial Times, The Times – their articles are often translated and discussed in the Ukrainian media space. <https://www.theguardian.com/europe>, <https://www.ft.com/>, <https://www.thetimes.com/>

Deutsche Welle (DW) – Ukrainian-language service providing news and analysis

- <https://www.dw.com/>

Belarus Segodnya (Беларусь Сегодня) – official state media, promoting a pro-Russian narrative - <https://www.sb.by/>

ONT, BelTA – Belarusian TV channels available in the border areas of Ukraine

- <https://ont.by/>, <https://belta.by/>

MTVA (Magyar Televízió) – Hungarian public television with a channel aimed at Hungarian minorities - <https://mediaklikk.hu/>

China – CGTN, available online, tries to shape the narrative of global events

- <https://www.cgtn.com/>

Al Jazeera, regularly reports on the situation in Ukraine in an international context

- <https://www.aljazeera.com/>

Arguments and Facts - <https://aif.ru/>

Tass Agency - <https://tass.ru/>

REGNUM Agency - <http://regnum.ru/>

Rossiyskaya Gazeta - <https://rg.ru/>

RBK - <https://www.rbc.ru/>

vi. Hybrid initiatives and extraordinary media projects

United News (Ukrainian: Єдині новини) - a unique project of the Ukrainian news telethon, which was launched on February 24, 2022 - the day of the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. The aim of the initiative was to create a single source of reliable information and coordinate the activities of the largest media in response to the war crisis. The "United News" project is the result of cooperation between the state and private television broadcasters. It combines the resources of public media (Suspilne) and large private media groups, including: 1+1 Media, StarLightMedia, Inter Media Group, Media Group Ukraine. This makes this project a unique example of public-private partnership in the media sphere. Each of these groups provides content in designated time blocks, creating a 24-hour news stream available on multiple platforms, including television, YouTube, and social media. The project was created in cooperation with the Ukrainian authorities and is coordinated by government and media representatives.

The main goal of United News is to provide Ukrainian citizens and the international audience with up-to-date and reliable information during the war. The initiative also aims to counter Russian propaganda and disinformation by providing credible information about events in Ukraine. The project has met with mixed reactions. On the one hand, it was widely praised for uniting the media and effectively combating disinformation in the difficult conditions of war. On the other hand, critics have pointed to the possible limitations of media pluralism under conditions of centralized coverage. Some journalists and media organizations have pointed to the threat such actions may pose to editorial independence, especially in the long term.

United News is broadcast on both traditional TV channels and online, which allows it to reach a wide audience, including the Ukrainian diaspora and international audiences.

The initiative has gained great importance in building international awareness of the situation in Ukraine and its fight against Russian aggression.

2) Non-traditional media (bloggers, influencers, social media, YouTube, etc.)

i. Affiliated

Бутусов Плюс / Butusov Plus - the channel of journalist Yuri Butusov, known for his sharp commentary on the situation on the front and domestic politics of Ukraine. He publishes on social media. Pro-Ukrainian, critical of the authorities. Publishes military analysis and political commentary.

<https://www.youtube.com/@ButusovPlus>,
<https://t.me/s/ButusovPlus>, <https://x.com/UButusov>

Pravda Gerashchenko / Антон Геращенко - channels of former Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Anton Gerashchenko. Pro-Ukrainian, informational. Publishes information from the frontlines and analysis of events.

https://t.me/s/Pravda_Gerashchenko
https://x.com/Gerashchenko_en, <https://www.facebook.com/anton.gerashchenko.7>

Павло Казарін (Pavlo Kazarin) - publicist and journalist, discussing events in Ukraine from a geopolitical and social perspective on YouTube. Pro-Ukrainian, educational.

<https://t.me/s/pavelkazarin>, <https://www.facebook.com/kazarin.pavel>

Євген Карась (Evgen Karas) – channel (YouTube) of the leader of a social organization engaged in patriotic activism. Pro-Ukrainian, nationalist. https://t.me/s/KARAS_EVGEN,
<https://www.youtube.com/@YevgenKaras>, https://x.com/Eugen_Karas

Дмитрий Гордон (Dmytro Gordon) - popular Ukrainian journalist, conducting interviews with politicians, experts and public figures on YouTube. Pro-Ukrainian, analytical.

<https://gordonua.com/>

https://x.com/dmitry_gordon, <https://www.youtube.com/@DmytriyGordon>

Соловьев LIVE (Soloviev Live) – channels (on various platforms) of Vladimir Soloviev, one of the main propagandists of the Kremlin. Extremely pro-Russian, propagandist. Anti-Ukrainian propaganda and disinformation.

<https://x.com/SolovievLive>, <https://www.youtube.com/@VladimirSolovievcom>

Володимир Зеленський - official profile of the President of Ukraine on Facebook, informing about the current situation in the country. Publishes official announcements, reports from international visits, military successes. Has international reach.

<https://www.facebook.com/zelenskyy.official>

<https://x.com/ZelenskyyUa>, https://t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official

Mir Sewodnia (<https://t.me/s/yurasumy>) – a channel (3.13 million subscribers) run by Yuri Podoliaka, a pro-Russian commentator who regularly publishes analyses and opinions supporting Russian policy towards Ukraine. Podoliaka uses Telegram as a platform to spread content justifying the Russian invasion and undermining Ukrainian sovereignty. Podoliaka has been included on the sanctions list of Canada (<https://www.opensanctions.org/>) and the Myrotvorets database (<https://myrotvorets.center/>).

Zergulio (<https://t.me/SergeyKolyasnikov>) – a channel (381 000 subscribers) of Russian milblogger Sergey Koliashnikov. He posts content supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Koliashnikov has been added to the Myrotvorets (myrotvorets.center) database.

Oleg Tsariov (<https://t.me/olegtsarov>) – channel (343 000 subscribers) of former Party of Regions deputy and supporter of the idea of "Novorossiya". Tsariov is included in the Myrotvorets (<https://myrotvorets.center/>) database for treason against Ukraine.

Semyon Piegov aka WarGonzo (<https://t.me/wargonzo>) – channel (998.7k subscribers) run by Russian propagandist and "war correspondent" Semyon Piegov. He regularly publishes materials supporting Russian military operations, including reports from the frontlines and disinformation narratives about Ukraine. WarGonzo is one of the most recognizable propaganda channels on Telegram.

Yevgeny Poddubny (<https://t.me/epoddubny>) - a well-known Russian war journalist, closely associated with the Kremlin's narratives. On his channel (739.3 thousand subscribers), he promotes theses supporting the Russian invasion and denying Russia's responsibility for war crimes.

Alexander Kots (<https://t.me/sashakots>) - a journalist and propagandist (592.5 thousand subscribers), regularly reporting on events in Ukraine from a Russian perspective. Kots's publications have a slightly milder tone, but still fit into the Kremlin's rhetoric, supporting Russian policy and warfare.

Anatoly Shariy (<https://t.me/ASupersharij>) - a former journalist and well-known blogger (1.3 million subscribers), suspected by the Ukrainian authorities of high treason. He is also the head of the illegal party in Ukraine "Shariyya Party", which is accused of ties with Russia. Shariy is said to live in Spain, and his lawyer is said to be Gonzalo Boye - the same lawyer who represented Pablo Gonzalez aka Pavel Rubtsov! Shariy actively criticizes the Ukrainian government and supports pro-Russian narratives. He is a member of the International Federation of Journalists (imi.org.ua). During the full-scale war, the channel has been growing in viewership from 563 714 subscribers (30.05.22) to 1 308 684 subscribers today, an increase of 132%.

Oleksandr Semchenko (<https://t.me/AleksandrSemchenko>) - a blogger from Donetsk (300k subscribers) who openly supports Russia's actions. He publishes content that criticizes Ukraine and supports separatism, being an active element of the pro-Russian information war.

Николаевский Ванёк (https://t.me/vanek_nikolaev) – a channel (2 648 096 subscribers) mainly featuring current news about the ZSU.

ii. Non-affiliated (Anonymous)

During the war in Ukraine, social media became a key field of information warfare, gathering numerous unaffiliated channels both supporting Ukraine and promoting pro-Russian narratives. Such dynamics are a natural phenomenon during the conflict, especially in the face of restrictions imposed on traditional Russian media. Ukraine has a law banning the activity of Russian media, and many of them have been subject to international sanctions, which forced them to transfer their activity to social media. As a result, the Internet has seen the emergence of both channels exposing Russian propaganda and supporting Ukrainian forces, as well as platforms spreading disinformation and pro-Russian propaganda. Social media such as Telegram, TikTok, and Facebook play a dual role: they are both a source of truthful information and a tool for manipulation, which significantly affects the global perception of the conflict.

Examples:

Liegitimnyj (<https://t.me/legitimniy>) - an anonymous channel (1.05 million subscribers) presenting itself as Ukrainian, but spreading pro-Russian narratives. It particularly attacks the administration of President Volodymyr Zelensky, weakening trust in the Ukrainian government. During the full-scale war, the channel's viewership increases from 588 942 subscribers (05/30/22) to 1 080 332 subscribers (11/06/24), an 83% increase.

Rezident (https://t.me/rezident_ua) - like "Liegitimnyj", this channel (1.01 million subscribers) names itself as Ukrainian, but in reality it shares pro-Russian narratives. The content regularly criticizes the Ukrainian authorities, including President Zelensky. During the full-scale war, the channel's viewership increased from 508 923 subscribers (05/30/22) to 1 020 854 subscribers (11/06/24), which gives us a 100% increase.

Tajnaja Kantsjelariya (https://t.me/Taynaya_kantselyariya) - Russian propaganda channel (317k subscribers), focusing on geopolitical topics. It promotes pro-Russian

narratives and propagates content supporting the Kremlin's policies. It advertises channels allegedly close to the Kremlin administration (t.me/kremlin_sekret).

Zhensina s kosoj (<https://t.me/skosoi>) - channel (120.8k subscribers) naming itself as Ukrainian, although it repeats pro-Russian content, often attacking President Zelensky and his administration.

Na samom diele w Dniepre (<https://t.me/NSDVDnepre>) - channel (28.5k subscribers) allegedly devoted to information from the Dnieper, but its content fits into the pro-Russian narrative.

Trucha Ukraina (<https://t.me/s/truexanewsua>) – an independent news channel (2.67M subscribers) with a "boulevard" approach to news.

Additionally:

In February 2021, the SBU uncovered a network of pro-Russian channels set up by the Russian GRU. The article mentions that the services inspired Ukrainians to set up pro-Russian channels - among others, "**Legitymny**" (<https://t.me/s/legitimniy>), which had 160,000 subscribers at the time, "**Rezident**" (https://t.me/s/rezident_ua) (103,000 subscribers), and "**Kartel**" (https://t.me/s/ZE_kartel) (34,000 subscribers). In addition, a number of pro-Russian local channels were identified, supposedly transmitting information from Mykolaiv, Odessa, Kherson or Kharkov.

<https://babel.ua/ru/news/58591-legitimnyy-rezident-i-drugie-sbu-zayavila-o-razoblachenii-seti-telegram-kanalov-kotorye-sozdali-rossiyskie-specsluzhby>

iii. Associated with specific groups

The information environment of Ukraine has undergone a profound transformation in recent years, especially in the context of the dynamic development of non-traditional media, such as blogs, social media, YouTube channels, and influencer activities. In the face of armed conflict, these forms of communication have gained crucial importance,

becoming both a tool for propaganda and disinformation, and a space for building society's resistance to information manipulation. The links of non-traditional media with specific interest groups, both internal and external, highlight their strategic role in shaping narratives about the war and Ukraine's domestic and international policies.

One of the most important actors in this space is Telegram, which, thanks to its structure and ability to quickly disseminate content, has become the most important platform for younger users. Channels such as **“Ukraine Now”** and **“DeepStateUA”** play a key role in transmitting pro-Ukrainian narratives, supported by state and independent initiatives. At the same time, Telegram is also a space used by pro-Russian propaganda groups such as **“Rybar”** (<https://t.me/rybar>) and **“Z-патриот”** (<https://t.me/zpatriot2023>), which take advantage of the platform's anonymity to spread disinformation and amplify Kremlin narratives. Such connections indicate the involvement of both state- and private-funded interest groups in activities carried out on this platform.

YouTube, as the most widely used video platform, serves as a space for both reliable analysis and propaganda. Channels such as **“Телебачення Торонто”** effectively reinforce the Ukrainian patriotic narrative, reaching millions of subscribers with satirical and informative content. At the same time, pro-Russian channels such as **“Рой ТВ”** (https://tlgrm.ru/channels/%40roy_tv_mk) carry out disinformation activities that are supported by the Kremlin. A distinctive feature of the platform is the ability to influence wide audiences with tailored content, which makes it an extremely effective tool for both information and disinformation activities.

TikTok is gaining popularity among younger age groups, becoming a new battlefield in information warfare. Short, dynamic content allows for quick reach to a wide audience, which is used by both pro-Ukrainian creators and pro-Russian propaganda sources. The presence of older users on the platform indicates its growing importance in shaping public opinion, especially in the context of viral trends that quickly cross age and geographic boundaries.

Facebook and Viber remain the dominant platforms among older age groups, making them key communication channels for this part of society. At the same time, these platforms are also susceptible to disinformation, especially due to users' lower awareness of information threats. Numerous pro-Russian groups on Facebook or mass-mailing messages on Viber show that these media are actively used in information warfare, both by internal and external parties.

Analysis of the affiliations of these media shows clear links to various interest groups. Platforms such as **"Strana.ua"**, accused of promoting pro-Russian content, use alternative domains and channels to bypass restrictions imposed by the Ukrainian authorities. Independent media such as **"Hromadske.TV"**, financed by international grants, focus on providing reliable information and analysis. This media duality shows how different sources of information are used to pursue conflicting political and ideological goals.

Changes in the information habits of Ukrainian society, resulting from the ongoing digitalization and conflict, underscore the growing popularity of online sources. The decline in trust in traditional media, such as television, contrasts with the growing importance of social media and alternative communication channels. At the same time, the anonymity of many platforms, such as Telegram, and the lack of effective content verification mechanisms on TikTok and YouTube, pose a significant challenge to combating disinformation. Ukraine's information environment reflects a broad range of efforts to both counter disinformation and propagate false narratives. The role of non-traditional media in shaping public opinion and their connections with interest groups, both pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian, indicate their strategic importance in the current conflict. Changing user preferences and the development of media technologies will be key to further shaping Ukraine's information environment and its resilience to disinformation threats.

iv. Foreign

The information environment of Ukraine in the context of foreign media reflects the complex dynamics of information warfare and competition in global narrative. The presence of non-Ukrainian media, both those supporting democratic values and those promoting pro-Russian narratives, is crucial for understanding contemporary challenges in providing reliable information and countering disinformation. The armed conflict and its information dimension have given particular importance to the activities of international media, which, using digital platforms, reach Ukrainian audiences, shaping their information habits and opinions.

Foreign media supporting pro-Russian narratives, such as **RT (Russia Today)** or **Sputnik**, despite restrictions, use various strategies to maintain influence over audiences in Ukraine and beyond. Sanctions and technical blocks are circumvented through mirror websites, alternative domains, and content distribution on social media such as Telegram, YouTube, and Twitter. These channels adapt their content to local audiences in order to increase its effectiveness and credibility. Examples such as **Readovka** and **Tsargrad** show how a wide network of pro-Russian foreign media works to advance the Kremlin's goals while supporting global propaganda and disinformation. Their online activities are closely correlated with Russia's information policy, which treats media as a strategic tool in hybrid warfare.

On the other hand, independent international media play a key role in countering disinformation and promoting democratic values. Platforms such as **BBC Ukrainian**, **Deutsche Welle**, **Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty**, and **Voice of America** are valued for their objectivity and professionalism. Through local editions in Ukrainian and Russian, they reach a wide audience, providing credible information and analysis. Projects such as the **Deutsche Welle Academy** support the development of independent Ukrainian media, providing training and technical assistance, which strengthens their ability to compete with pro-Russian narratives.

Neighboring countries of Ukraine also make a significant contribution to the international media space, contributing to reporting on the situation in the region. Polish media such as **Polskie Radio**, **Belsat TV**, **Onet**, **Gazeta Wyborcza** and **Rzeczpospolita** provide reliable information on the conflict, international relations and humanitarian support. **Belsat TV** in particular, although mainly focused on Belarus, actively promotes democratic values and supports independent voices in Ukraine. Through multilingual publications, these media outlets reach different audiences, including political elites and decision-makers, which further strengthens their influence.

However, the activities of foreign media are associated with significant challenges. The growing popularity of international sources, especially propaganda ones, carries the risk of disinformation and manipulation. Ukrainian society, faced with an increasing amount of content of mixed credibility, requires support in the field of media education and the ability to critically analyze information. These activities are necessary to counteract the effects of disinformation and strengthen the information resilience of society.

At the same time, the integration of independent media activities with Ukrainian media initiatives can contribute to building a more resilient information ecosystem. International cooperation in the field of journalistic training, exchange of experience, and financing of independent media projects is an important element of the strategy to ensure information sovereignty of Ukraine. However, maintaining a balance between external support and local media autonomy will be crucial in order to avoid excessive dependence on foreign actors and to maintain the integrity of the Ukrainian information environment.

v. Cyclical events, nationwide and regional events

Ukraine celebrates both state and religious holidays, which are non-working days. Below is a calendar of the most important holidays and regular cultural events, both state and region.

State and religious holidays in Ukraine:

- New Year - January 1
- Christmas - December 25 - In 2023, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church switched to the New Julian calendar, and Christmas is celebrated on December 25. Previously, it was celebrated on January 7.
- International Women's Day – March 8
- Easter – movable date
- Labor Day – May 1
- Day of Remembrance and Victory over Nazism in World War II – May 8
- Holy Trinity – movable date
- Constitution Day of Ukraine – June 28
- Day of Ukrainian Statehood – July 15
- Independence Day of Ukraine – August 24
- Day of Defenders of Ukraine – October 1

Cycling cultural events in Ukraine:

- **Atlas Weekend Music and Art Festival** – one of the largest music festivals in Eastern Europe, held in the summer in Kyiv. This year it was held again despite the war. The festival was visited by 63,673 guests. It was possible to collect 100,270,376 hryvnia for drones and robots for the Armed Forces of Ukraine. A total of 139,617 people and companies took part in the fundraiser., An apartment in Kyiv and a bottle of Bakhmut champagne filled on February 23, 2022 were auctioned among those who made the largest donations to the army. The bottle reached the price of 235,000 hryvnia.
- **Odessa International Film Festival** – a prestigious film event attracting creators from all over the world.

- **Festival "Jazz Koktebel"** - a jazz music festival, traditionally held in Crimea, and after the annexation moved to different cities of Ukraine.
- **Festival "Lviv MozArt"** - a classical music festival in Lviv, dedicated to the work of Leopold Mozart, the father of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.
- **Festival "GogolFest"** - an interdisciplinary festival of contemporary art, held in different cities of Ukraine.
- Due to the ongoing armed conflict, many of the above events have been canceled, suspended or moved to other, safer places.

Important regional holidays and events:

- **Lviv Day** - celebrated on the first Saturday of May, with numerous concerts, parades and cultural events.
- **Festival "Sorochinsky Fair"** - a traditional fair held in the town of Velyki Sorochinci in the Poltava region, famous for handicrafts, local dishes and artistic performances. Festival "Bukovinian Meetings" - an international folklore festival held in Chernivtsi, promoting the culture of the Bukovina region.
- **Donetsk Day** - celebrated on the last Sunday of August, with cultural and sports events (currently limited due to the war).

It should be remembered that the situation in Ukraine is dynamic, and the dates and forms of celebrations may change depending on security conditions and decisions of local authorities.

3) Non-governmental and other non-state organizations influencing opinions

The Russian aggression against Ukraine, which began in 2014 and escalated into a full-scale invasion in 2022, has significantly affected the functioning of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the country. The conflict has mobilized civil society, leading to

an increase in the number of NGOs involved in humanitarian aid, support for refugees, infrastructure reconstruction, and combating Russian disinformation. These organizations play a key role in shaping public opinion, both in Ukraine and abroad. At the same time, the activities of organizations associated with pro-Russian groups are closely monitored, and many of them have lost the ability to function due to the new national security legislation.

i. Associated with specific groups

"Own" (pro-Ukrainian, supporting civil society and democratization):

Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Group (UHHRU) - an organization dedicated to defending human rights in the conflict-affected areas - <https://www.helsinki.org.ua/>

Razom for Ukraine - an international organization providing humanitarian aid, military support, and promoting Ukrainian culture abroad - <https://www.razomforukraine.org//>

Euromaidan SOS - a civil movement formed after the Euromaidan protests, focusing on human rights and support for families of war victims - <http://euromaidansos.org/>

Analytical organizations such as the **Atlantic Council** and the **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** conduct research and publications on the situation in Ukraine, influencing international policy towards the country. A separate category in the face of Ukraine's defensive war with Russia are Ukrainian organizations that combat propaganda and disinformation. In response to the threats of disinformation, both the Ukrainian state and independent non-governmental organizations have taken intensive measures to counter propaganda and raise public awareness. The list also includes government initiatives, which are added due to the social nature of their activities (they involve volunteer Internet users in their work):

The Center for Combating Disinformation (CCD) - established in 2021, subordinate to the Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council. Its main goal is to monitor the information space and counter disinformation. The Center cooperates with international social media platforms such as Meta and YouTube to block channels spreading pro-Russian narratives. Thanks to this cooperation, it was possible to remove hundreds of pro-Russian channels and accounts. Currently, the activities of CCD are temporarily limited - the organization's website has stopped working, which may be due to technical problems. Nevertheless, the Center remains a key element of the Ukrainian strategy to combat disinformation, publishing analyses and reports on Russian information operations.

StopFake - an independent organization NGO founded in 2014 by the Mohyla School of Journalism in Kyiv. The organization is engaged in exposing Russian fake news and propaganda, analyzing and exposing false media narratives. StopFake operates a website and social media platforms where it publishes detailed reports and articles. The project has gained international recognition as a model for effective combating disinformation and remains active in providing tools for civil society in the field of media literacy.

Project BRAMA - an initiative of the Kyiv Cyber Police supported by volunteers. The project aims to cleanse the information space of Ukraine from Russian propaganda and fake news. BRAMA operates through Telegram, engaging the community in identifying and reporting disinformation content. The project also promotes media literacy and cyber hygiene, encouraging citizens to critically read online content. With over 153 thousand subscribers on Telegram, BRAMA has become an important tool in the fight against manipulation in the digital space.

The Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security of Ukraine (CSCISU) - focuses on analyzing Russian propaganda and promoting media literacy among Ukrainians. The Center conducts research on citizens' information habits, which helps to design effective educational strategies. The organization cooperates with government institutions and the social sector, organizing educational campaigns and workshops on

digital security. CSCISU plays a key role in building information resilience in Ukrainian society.

The FREEDOM project - an initiative of the state channel UATV, which is aimed at Russian-speaking audiences, both in Russia and in the occupied territories of Ukraine. The project operates 24/7, providing reliable information on the war and the situation in Ukraine. FREEDOM broadcasts programs in Russian, and its broadcasts are available via YouTube and satellite. This initiative plays a significant role in countering Russian propaganda, reaching viewers who have limited access to independent media.

Detektor Media - Ukrainian organization monitoring and analyzing media content. Its activities include detecting disinformation, educating on media literacy, and organizing social campaigns. Detektor Media cooperates with international partners, such as the European Union and UNESCO, to strengthen the ability of society to critically perceive information.

"Foreign" (affiliated with pro-Russian groups or acting in favor of the interests of foreign states):

Ruskiymir Foundation - promoting Russian culture and historical narrative; activities in Ukraine have been largely banned - <https://ruskiymir.ru/>

International Eurasian Movement - an organization supporting the ideology of Russian neo-imperialism, monitored by the Ukrainian security services - <https://evrazia.org/>

Informal networks of pro-Russian online media - although not always officially recognized as NGOs, influence public opinion by spreading disinformation. They operate mainly through anonymous accounts and pages on social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and Telegram. Their goal is to spread disinformation and influence public opinion. It should be noted that access to websites and social media profiles of pro-Russian organizations may be restricted in Ukraine due to measures aimed at protecting national security.

4) Business entities with the potential to influence the shape and availability of content

The Ukrainian media space is largely shaped by various business entities that play a key role in creating and distributing content. A characteristic feature of the Ukrainian media market is the dominance of private media conglomerates owned by oligarchs such as Ihor Kolomoisky, Dmytro Firtash, Rinat Akhmetov and Viktor Pinchuk. Their activities affect both the formation of public opinion and the availability of information. For years, these oligarchs have used their media empires as a tool to promote their own economic and political interests, which has caused controversy, especially in the context of conflicts of interest.

The war in Ukraine significantly changed the balance of power in the media sector, and the introduction of the joint news program "United News" consolidated the media's activities to counter Russian disinformation. Private media were included in this initiative, which limited their independence but increased information efficiency in wartime conditions. Some owners, such as Akhmetov, have withdrawn from the media market, which may herald structural changes in the Ukrainian information space.

In addition to traditional media, other entities, such as digital platforms (e.g. YouTube, Telegram) and independent Internet portals, also influence the shape and availability of content. In the era of digitalization, it is these platforms that often determine the reach and reception of content, shaping both domestic and international narratives. At the same time, attention should be paid to foreign media and social media platforms, which have a significant impact on Ukrainian society, offering content of varying degrees of credibility.

Dynamic changes in the media market indicate the need for further democratization and transparency in media management, strengthening the public sector and regulating the influence of large media groups. In conditions of war and the ongoing political

transformation, ensuring pluralism and independence of content in the information space remains a key challenge. Business entities that have had an impact on the media for years will continue to play an important role, although their importance may be limited by reforms and state actions aimed at the development of public media and independent platforms.

2. Information habits of society

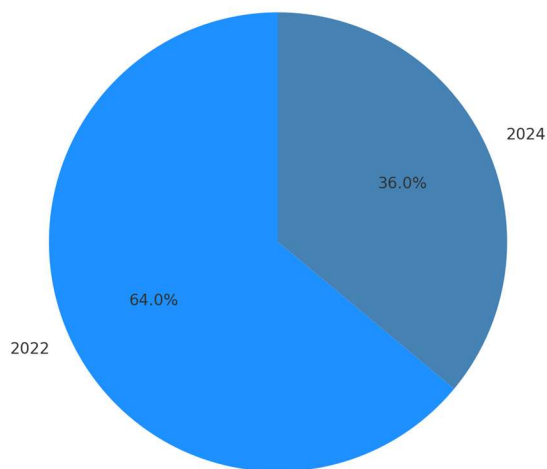
a) Audience and perception of state media

State media in Ukraine play a key role in providing public information and promoting national culture and identity. The main public broadcaster is the National Public Radio Company of Ukraine (Suspilne), which manages both television and public radio. Established in 2017 as part of the media reform, Suspilne operates under a law guaranteeing independence from the government. The organization is financed from the state budget, and additional funds are obtained from grants and international cooperation. Through its membership in the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), Suspilne participates in international projects such as the Eurovision Song Contest.

State television

The main television channel is UA:Pershyi, which serves as a public media with nationwide coverage. Managed by Suspilne, the channel played a significant role in providing reliable information during the Russian invasion. It was part of the United News (Єдині новини) information project, which integrated the activities of the largest Ukrainian media, creating a unified information message during the war. The project was positively assessed for its effectiveness in combating disinformation, but critics point to the risk of limiting media pluralism and increasing the state's influence on media coverage. The popularity of state television has declined in recent years, as illustrated by the data: in 2022, trust in television was 60.5%, while in 2024 it decreased to 34.1%.

Trust in television in 2022-2024



Another important channel is TV Rada, the official parliamentary broadcaster, whose mission is to increase the transparency of legislative processes and educate the public about the functioning of democratic institutions. Its content focuses on reporting on the activities of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, which strengthens citizens' trust in the political system.

State television also plays a key role in the regions, especially in frontline areas. Regional branches of Suspilne, such as Suspilne Kharkiv, Suspilne Donbas and Suspilne Kherson, adapt their programs to local needs, taking into account cultural and social specifics and current challenges. These branches are an irreplaceable source of information for residents who often have limited access to alternative media during wartime. With transmitters scattered throughout the country, Suspilne ensures continuity of broadcasting, even in regions affected by war. An example is Suspilne Krym, which broadcasts programs in Ukrainian, Russian and Crimean Tatar, in an effort to counter Russian propaganda and maintain contact with the people of Crimea.

State Radio

Ukrainian Radio, part of Suspilne, includes several channels with a diverse profile. Ukrainian Radio, the oldest and main channel, focuses on current events and political, social and cultural analysis. Radio Promen targets a younger, more dynamic audience, while Radio Kultura promotes literature, classical music and art. Radio Ukraine International also plays an important role, broadcasting content in foreign languages, helping to promote Ukraine abroad.

During the Russian invasion, Suspilne radio stations served as a key source of information, providing news about the situation on the front and official government announcements. They also became a platform for supporting citizen morale through patriotic and educational programs.

State Press

The official government press, represented by Uriadovyi Kuryer and Holos Ukrayiny, plays a significant role in providing information on the activities of the state administration and parliament. Uriadovyi Kuryer, published by the Cabinet of Ministers, focuses on government communications and legal acts, while Holos Ukrayiny reports on the work of members of parliament, increasing the transparency of the legislative process.

News Agencies

Ukrinform, the national news agency of Ukraine, plays a key role in providing reliable news both domestically and abroad. It publishes information in multiple languages, providing access to official communications to a wide audience. During the Russian aggression, Ukrinform has become an important tool in the fight against disinformation, strengthening the credibility of Ukraine's media coverage.

State media in Ukraine, while facing challenges stemming from the rapid growth of online media and declining public trust, play an invaluable role in providing credible information,

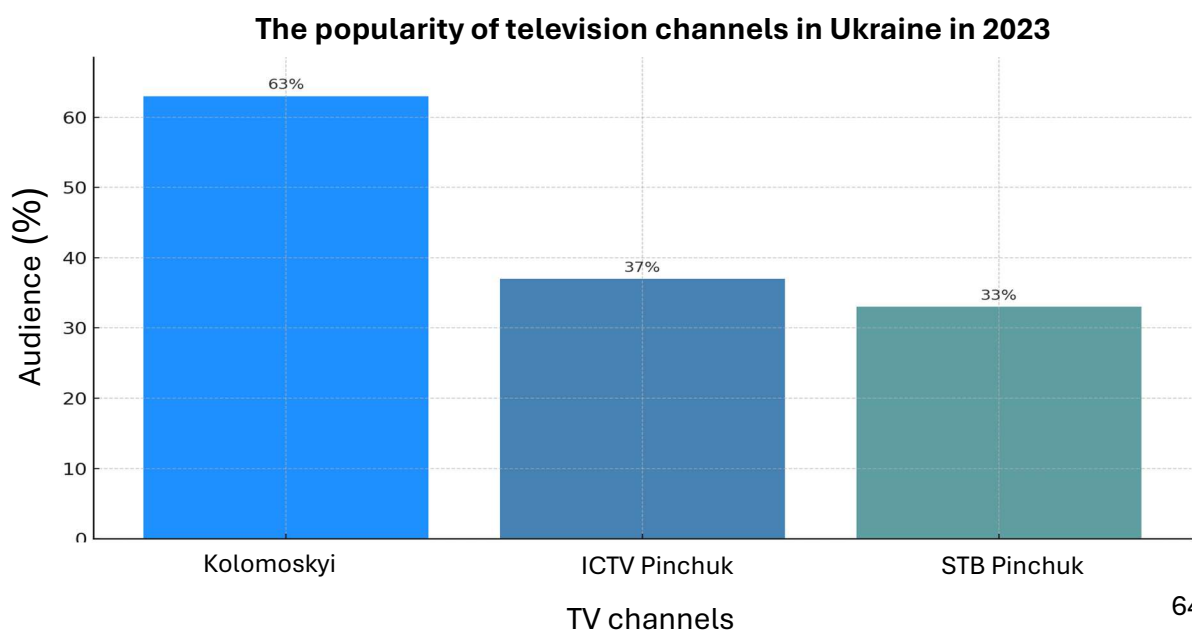
promoting culture, and supporting national unity. Projects such as United News and Suspilne's activities emphasize the importance of public-private partnerships in the difficult war environment. Maintaining editorial independence and media pluralism, which is essential for democracy and freedom of speech, remains a key challenge.

b) Audience and perception of non-state media, including party and sectarian/religious media

Non-state media in Ukraine play a key role in shaping public opinion, representing a variety of political, social, and religious interests. Although they offer a wide range of content, their public perception varies depending on their credibility, transparency of financing, and political affiliations.

Party media and their influence on society

The Ukrainian media scene is characterized by the significant influence of oligarchs who control many private TV channels and websites. These media often promote the interests of specific political groups. For example, 1+1, associated with Ihor Kolomoisky, is the most popular TV channel in Ukraine, with 63% of audience in 2023. Other stations, such as ICTV and STB, owned by Viktor Pinchuk, while also popular, have seen their audience drop to 37% and 33% respectively in 2023.



Online portals also reflect political affiliations. Obozrevatel.com, associated with politician Mykola Kniazhitsky, promotes content supporting European Solidarity, while Vesti.ua has been criticized for publishing pro-Russian narratives. The Ukrainian media landscape is dynamic, with the links between media and political groups changing based on current events.

Sectarian and religious media

Russia uses religious themes as a tool for propaganda and PSYOPS activities, targeting internal divisions and religious identity in Ukraine. A key aspect is the instrumentalization of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), which in the Russian narrative plays a quasi-political role, supporting the interests of the Kremlin. Ukrainian decisions, such as the banning of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), are presented by Russia as alleged religious persecution and Satanism, which aims to discredit the Ukrainian authorities in the eyes of the international community. Religious themes are widely used in disinformation campaigns. Popular narratives include accusations of persecution of Orthodox Christians, destruction of churches, and alleged dominance of Satanists in the Ukrainian government. Such messages aim to arouse emotions and fuel conflicts between different religious communities in Ukraine, which makes it difficult to build national and social unity. Examples of disinformation, such as claims of “Catholic expansion” or “anti-Islamic actions of Ukraine,” reinforce divisions religious organizations at the local and international levels.

In Ukraine, there are numerous religious media representing different denominations that play a role in shaping spiritual and social identity. Catholic channels such as EWTN Ukraine and Credo.pro support the Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic communities. Orthodox media such as Pomisna.info promote the independence of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine from Moscow while exposing pro-Russian propaganda. Among Muslim media, such as ATR and Islam in Ukraine, special emphasis is placed on promoting intercultural dialogue and education about Islam.

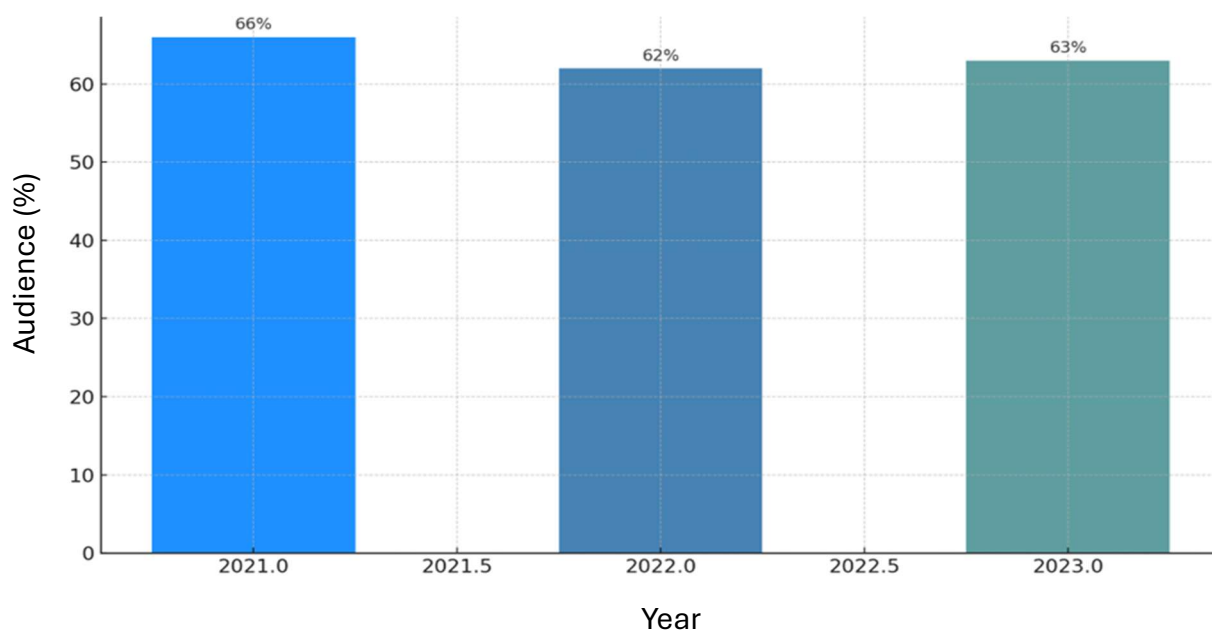
Russian propaganda exploits the complex religious structure of Ukraine to strengthen its narratives while undermining the credibility of independent religious communities. These activities are particularly dangerous because the instrumentalization of religion allows for the fusion of politics with emotional messages, which increases the susceptibility of the audience to disinformation. The activities of Ukrainian religious media are crucial in countering this influence, but require further support in the information and international context.

Ethnic media

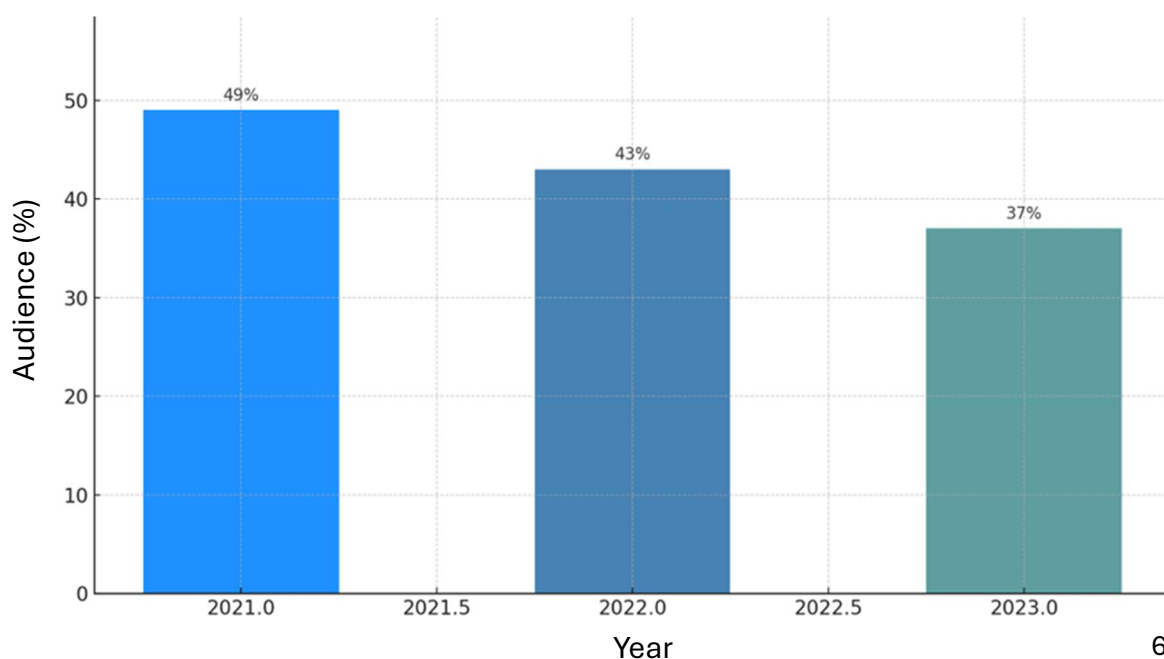
There are many media outlets in Ukraine aimed at national minorities, which play an important role in promoting language and culture. Examples include BucPress and Zorile Bucovinei, which serve the Romanian-speaking community, Radio Lviv and Kurier Galicyjski, which focus on Polish-Ukrainian topics. On the other hand, ATR, which serves the Crimean Tatar community and offers programs in three languages: Crimean Tatar, Ukrainian, and Russian, what allows it to reach a diverse audience.

Statistics of trust in non-state media

Analysis of data on the popularity of non-state television media shows significant differences in their audience over the years. The leader in popularity remains the 1+1 channel, associated with Ihor Kolomoisky, which maintains a stable level of audience: 66% in 2021, 62% in 2022, and 63% in 2023. The popularity of this channel is due to its strong media presence and neutrality in some political areas.

Audience of the 1+1 channel in the years 2021-2023

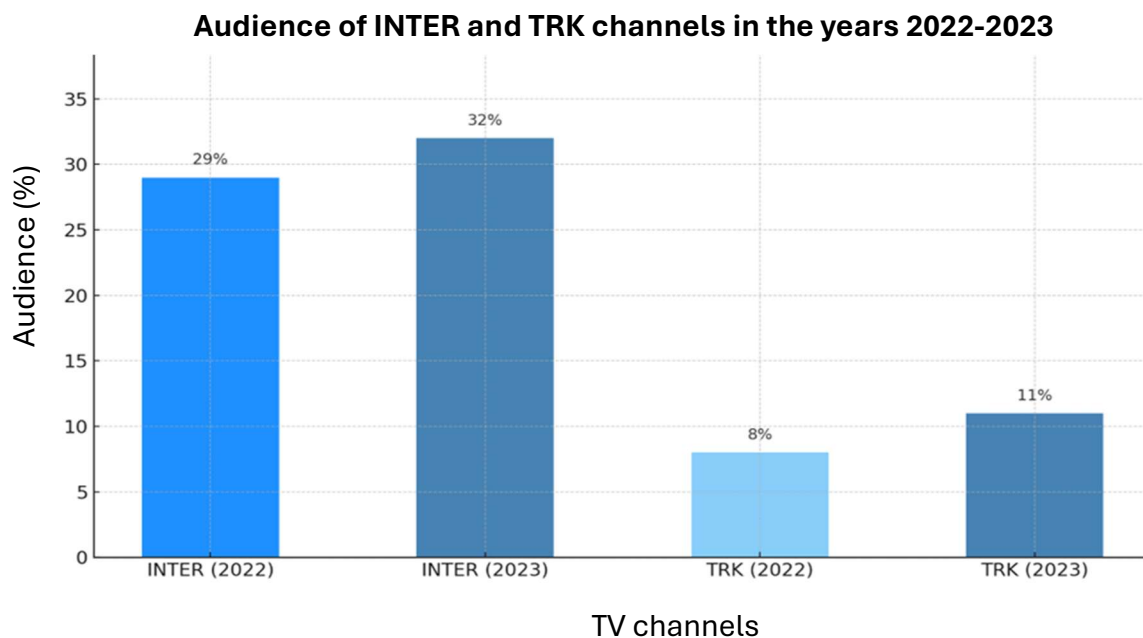
Second place in 2023 belongs to the ICTV channel, owned by Viktor Pinchuk. However, its popularity has been systematically declining—from 49% in 2021, to 43% in 2022, to 37% in 2023. This is the result of growing competition and changing preferences of viewers, who are increasingly using online platforms.

Audience of the ICTV channel in the years 2021-2023

Third place belongs to the STB channel, also owned by Viktor Pinchuk. Unlike ICTV, STB noted an increase in popularity: 27% in 2021, 26% in 2022, and 33% in 2023. This increase may be the result of adapting the programming offer to the changing needs of viewers.

It is also worth noting that there has been noticed a growth in popularity of other channels, such as INTER (from 29% in 2022 to 32% in 2023) and TRK (from 8% to 11% in the same period).

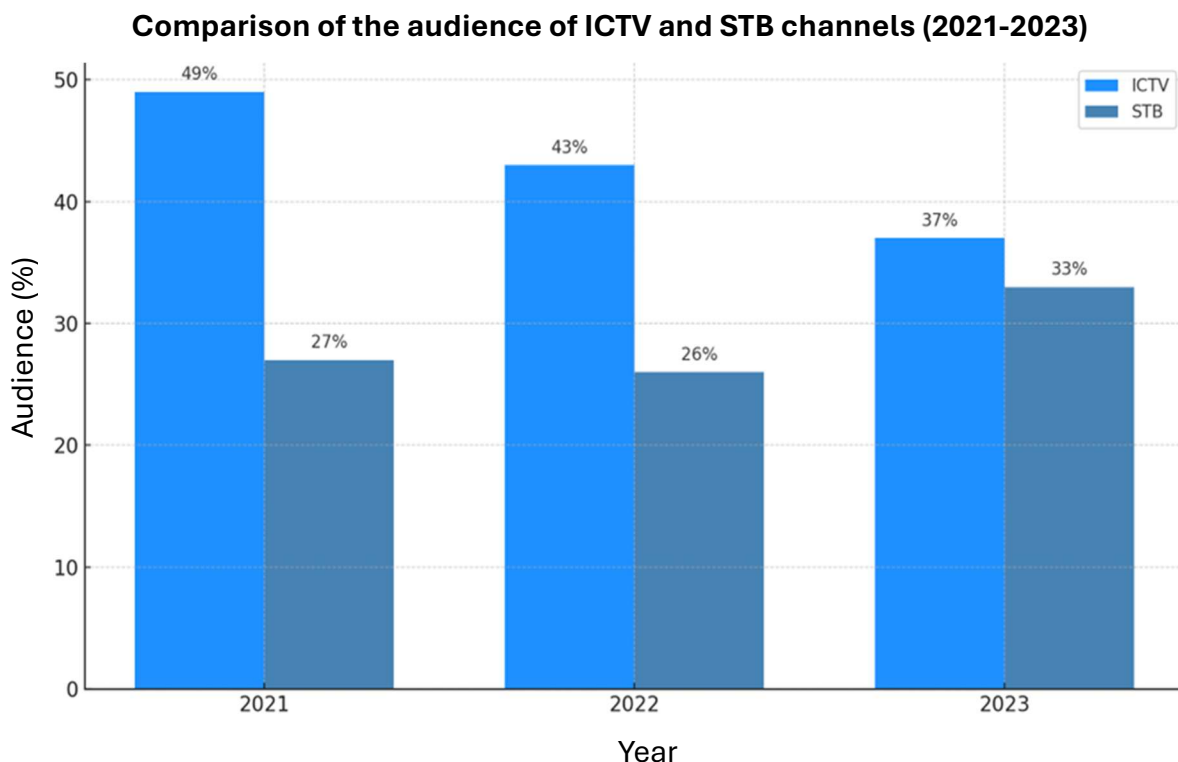
These data indicate the dynamic nature of the Ukrainian media market, which responds to changing social needs and political conditions. At the same time, the declining trust in television media (from 60.5% in 2022 to 34.1% in 2024) emphasizes the growth of alternative sources of information.



Non-state media in Ukraine – party, sectarian and ethnic, play an important role in shaping public opinion, reflecting the diverse information habits of society. The popularity of channels such as 1+1, which has maintained a stable level of audience over the years (66% in 2021, 63% in 2023), indicates trust in media that adapt their offer to a wide

audience. At the same time, the decline in interest in ICTV (from 49% in 2021 to 37% in 2023) and the rise in popularity of STB (from 26% to 33% in the same period) show how dynamically news preferences are changing, especially in the context of competition with online media.

Although non-state media contribute to information pluralism, their public perception is burdened by challenges related to disinformation, political connections, and religious manipulation. Trust in traditional television media fell from 60.5% in 2022 to 34.1% in 2024, which underlines the growing need for transparency of financing and credibility of the message, but may also be related to the launch of integrated content broadcasting. The above statistics reflect significant changes in the information habits of Ukrainians, who are increasingly choosing alternative sources, such as social platforms or online media.

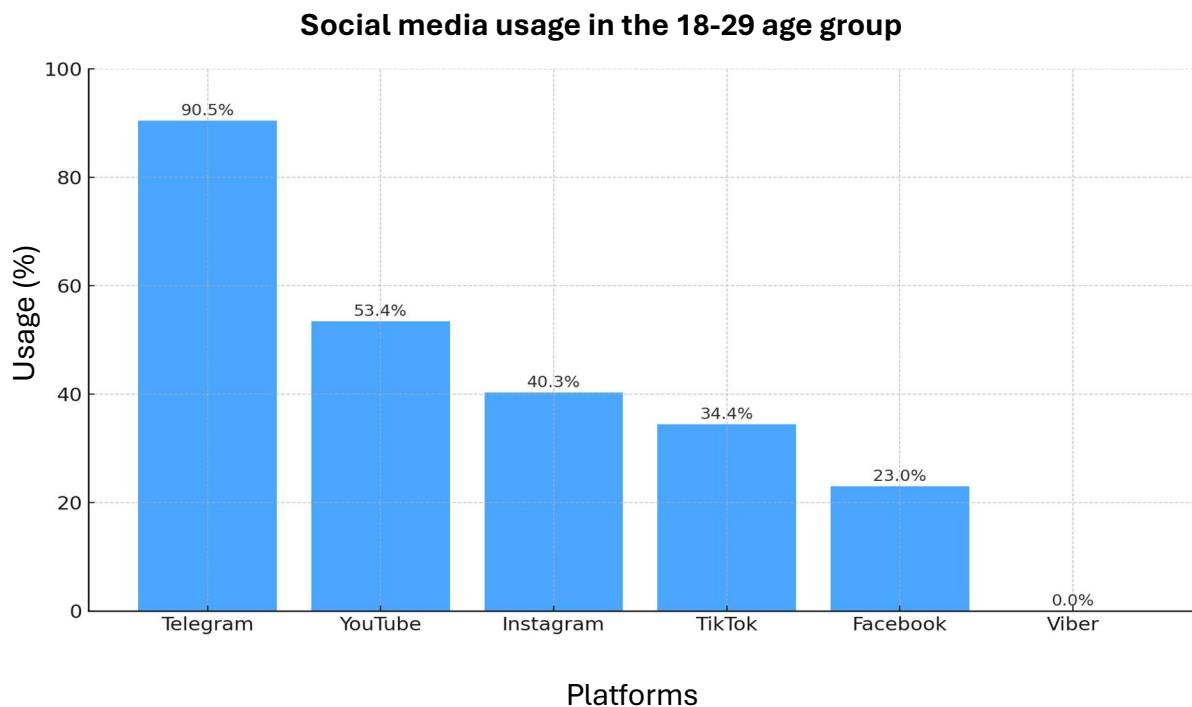


c) Popularity of online sources, including unverified ones

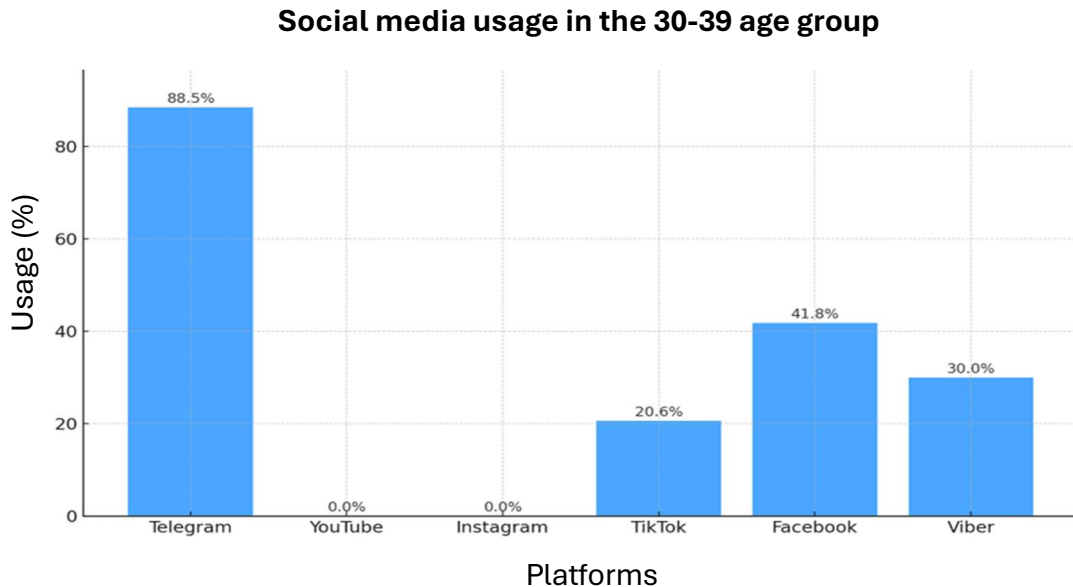
The popularity of online sources in Ukraine is changing dynamically, reflecting the impact of ongoing digitalization, armed conflict, and the growing number of social media users. The Internet, as an information space, has gained particular importance, becoming both a tool for rapid information delivery and a battlefield for disinformation. The development of digital platforms has influenced the change in the information habits of society, which is increasingly using online platforms instead of traditional media.

Analysis of the popularity of platforms by age indicates a clear differentiation in user preferences in Ukraine, which is crucial for understanding their media habits and susceptibility to different narratives.

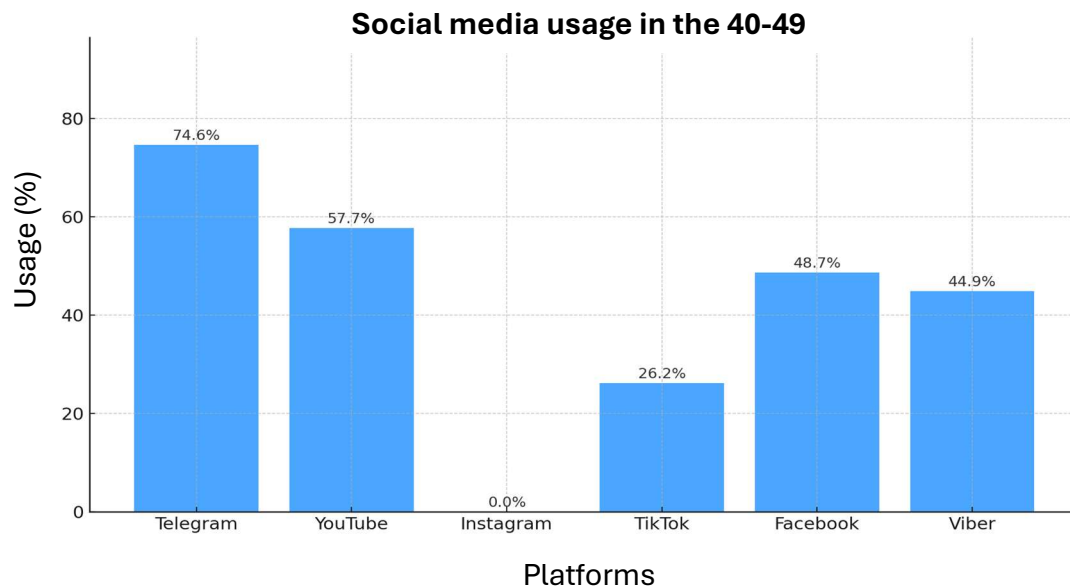
In the 18-29 age group, the dominant platform is Telegram, used by 90.5% of respondents. Younger users also show a significant presence on YouTube (53.4%) and Instagram (40.3%), with TikTok being relatively popular (34.4%). Facebook is marginal in this group (23%).



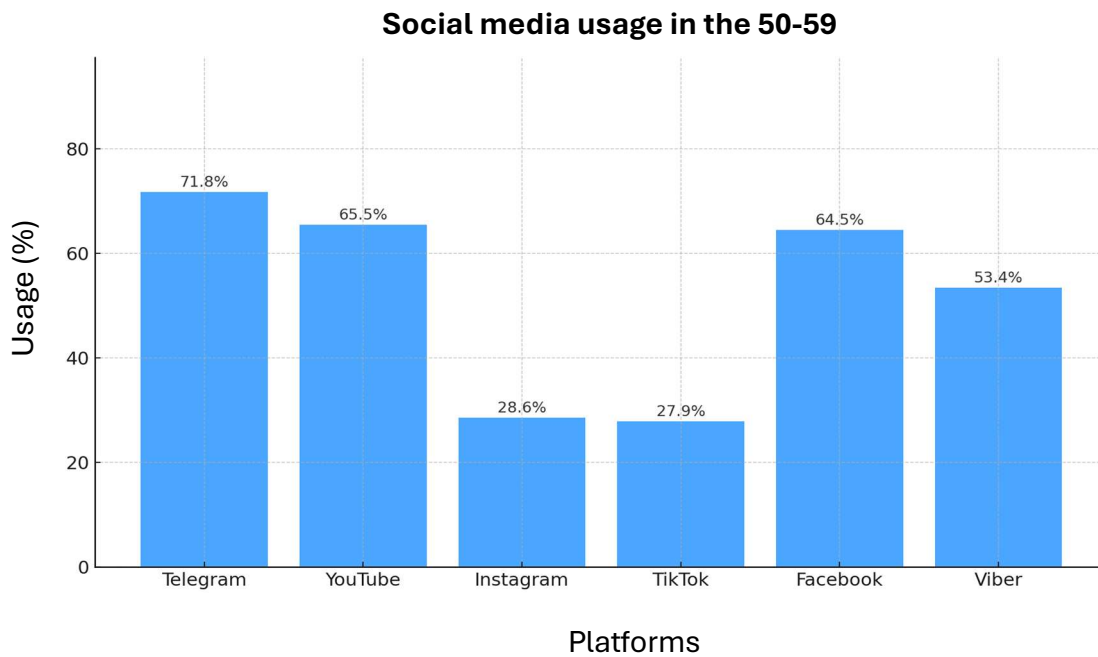
For those aged 30-39, Telegram remains the most popular platform (88.5%), but Facebook (41.8%) and Viber (30%) are used more often. TikTok is gaining in importance, although its reach is falling (20.6%).



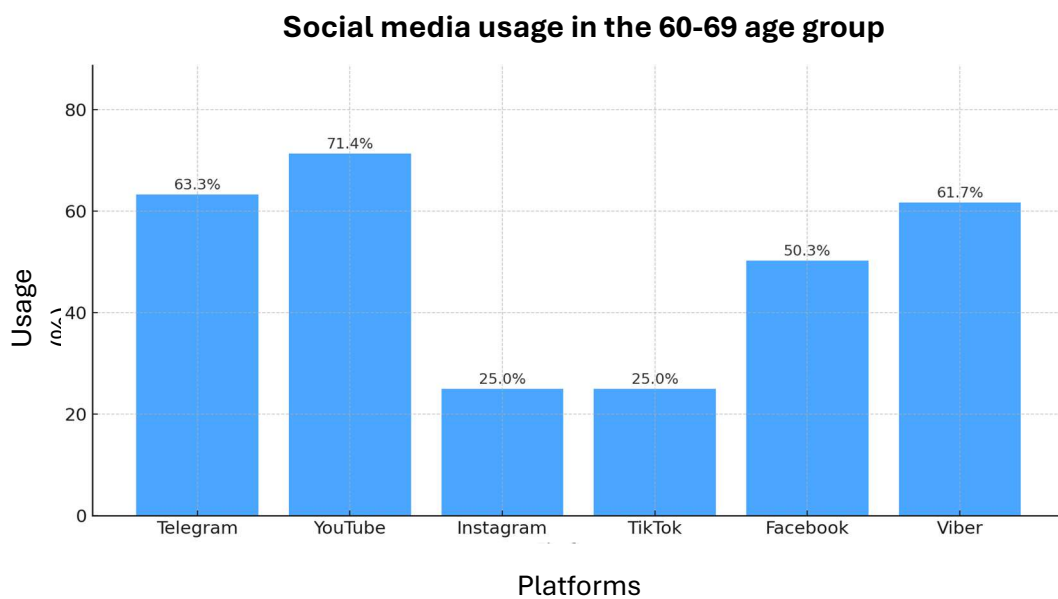
In the 40-49 age group, Telegram (74.6%) and YouTube (57.7%) remain dominant, but Facebook (48.7%) and Viber (44.9%) are starting to play a bigger role. TikTok, although used by 26.2%, shows a stable position in this group.



In the 50-59 age group, YouTube (65.5%) and Facebook (64.5%) are gaining in importance, while Viber (53.4%) and Telegram (71.8%) are still popular. Instagram and TikTok have a smaller influence, but are still present (28.6% and 27.9% respectively).

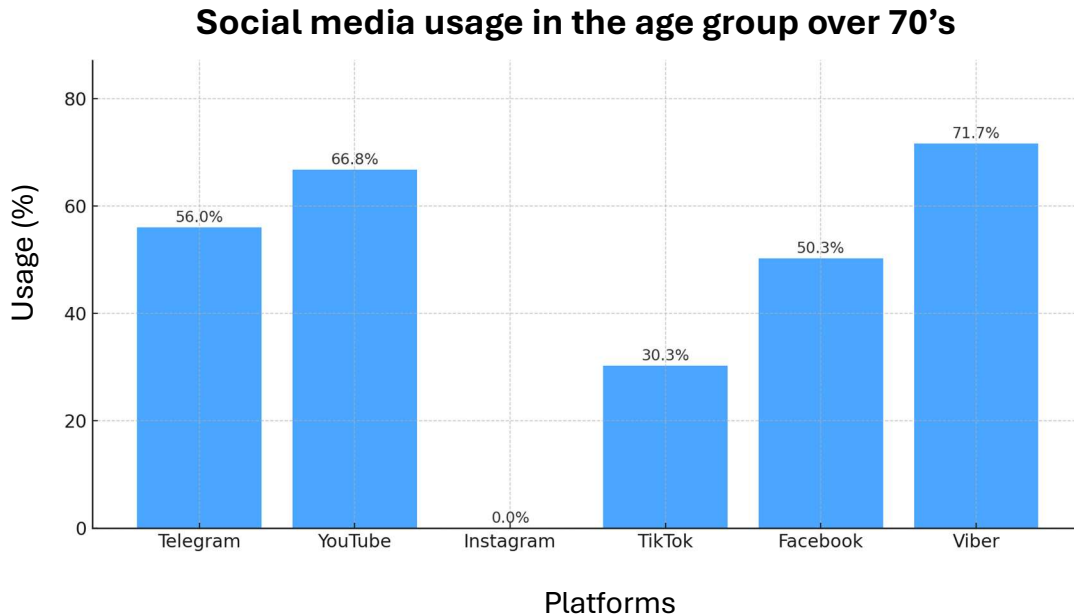


People aged 60-69 prefer YouTube (71.4%) and Viber (61.7%), but Telegram (63.3%) and Facebook (50.3%) also remain important. Instagram (25%) and TikTok (25%) are less popular but still used.



Viber (71.7%) clearly dominates among the over-70s, making it the main platform in this category. YouTube (66.8%) and Telegram (56%) maintain solid positions, while Facebook

(50.3%) remains a significant player. TikTok's surprisingly high share (30.3%) indicates its growing acceptance among older age groups.



Telegram and YouTube dominate among younger age groups, while Viber and Facebook are becoming increasingly important in older age groups. TikTok, despite its relatively smaller reach, is starting to gain users across all age groups, including the elderly. These differences can be crucial for shaping the news message and responding to potential disinformation threats.

Non-traditional media as a source of information

Among popular Internet portals, Strana.ua plays a special role, being one of the main news portals, despite accusations of propagating pro-Russian content. The portal uses alternative domains and channels, such as Telegram and YouTube, which emphasizes the importance of alternative media in conditions of limited access to traditional sources of information.

Another example is Hromadske.TV, an independent platform funded by international grants that offers reliable journalistic and reportage content. In the context of the war, Hromadske.TV has become a significant source of information, providing reliable analysis and live coverage.

Social media and channels on digital platforms

The decline in TV audience in Ukraine in 2023-2024 is the result of changes in the information habits of society. Trust in television dropped from 61.1% in 2023 to 34.1% in 2024, reflecting growing distrust of traditional media. At the same time, the popularity of mainstream TV stations such as ICTV and STB varied – while ICTV noticed a decline, STB increased its audience by adapting its offer to viewers' expectations. In parallel, the popularity of online media increased significantly. Telegram channels such as “Trucha Ukraina” and “Rezident” noticed a dynamic subscriber growth, up to 167% and 100%, respectively, between 2022 and 2024. YouTube continued to strengthen its position as a platform for satirical and informative content, with channels such as “Телебачення Торонто” surpassing one million subscribers. TikTok, with a reach of 55% of adult internet users, has become a popular medium among both younger and older age groups thanks to its dynamic content format. The rise of social media and online channels indicates a growing need for easily accessible and independent sources of information. However, their vulnerability to disinformation and the anonymity of many channels, especially on Telegram, pose significant challenges. These changes underscore the need for adaptation of traditional media and media education to counteract disinformation and to increase trust in credible sources of information.

d) Popularity of foreign media

Foreign media play a significant role in shaping the information habits of Ukrainian society, especially in the context of the ongoing armed conflict and information warfare. Thanks to access to diverse sources of information, Ukrainian audiences have the opportunity to benefit from both independent international analyses and propaganda content generated by pro-Russian channels. Platforms such as Facebook, Telegram, YouTube, TikTok and Twitter are key tools in spreading these narratives, attracting the attention of both democracy supporters and groups susceptible to disinformation.

Foreign pro-Russian media

Media such as RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik, despite the imposed sanctions, successfully bypass restrictions using techniques such as mirror websites, alternative domains and distribution of content via social media. Through these mechanisms, they continue to reach audiences in Ukraine and beyond, promoting pro-Russian narratives and disinformation. Other channels, such as Readovka and Tsargrad, also actively participate in the propaganda information warfare, adapting their messages to the specifics of the Ukrainian and international media markets.

Foreign media supporting democratic values

Independent international media, such as BBC Ukrainian, Deutsche Welle (DW), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Voice of America, and American news agencies (Reuters, Bloomberg, AP), play a key role in providing credible information and countering disinformation. With editions in Ukrainian and Russian, these media have a wide reach and are valued for their objectivity and professionalism. Additionally, many media projects in Ukraine are supported by international institutions, such as the Deutsche Welle Academy, which is involved in training journalists and supporting the development of independent media.

Media from neighbouring countries, such as Polskie Radio, Belsat TV, Onet, Gazeta Wyborcza and Rzeczpospolita, play a significant role in reporting on the situation in Ukraine, especially in the context of international relations and humanitarian support. Their publications in Ukrainian, Russian and English reach a wide audience, including political and social elites. Belsat TV, although mainly aimed at Belarus, also provides content on Ukraine, promoting independence and democratic values.

Challenges related to foreign media

The growing popularity of foreign media, both independent and pro-Russian, indicates significant changes in information consumption in Ukraine. On the one hand, they provide

wide access to diverse perspectives and analyses. On the other hand, their activity carries the risk of disinformation and manipulation, which underlines the importance of media education and strengthening the position of local, independent sources of information. Integrated actions supporting Ukrainian media and limiting propaganda influence, especially pro-Russian, are crucial to ensuring the country's information sovereignty.

e) Susceptibility to “bazaar” information, including conspiracy theories

Ukrainian society, especially the elderly, residents of rural areas and people with a lower level of education, is highly susceptible to “bazaar” information and conspiracy theories. In these groups, disinformation often spreads informally, through gossip, neighborly conversations or unverified Internet sources, which significantly complicates its verification and counteracting its influence. The lack of access to independent sources of information in some regions of Ukraine further compounds the problem.

Disinformation and conspiracy theories are deliberately tailored to the specifics of various social groups. Elderly people, often showing nostalgia for the Soviet Union, become the target of propaganda narratives using this nostalgia to build support for pro-Russian attitudes. An example is the promotional campaign “Babushka Z”, which uses strongly emotional images and narratives to reinforce the message of the unity of post-Soviet nations.

Rural residents with limited access to independent media are particularly vulnerable to narratives based on absurd conspiracy theories, such as the use of “combat mosquitoes” or “bats” in Ukrainian laboratories. These theories, although seemingly implausible, are gaining acceptance in environments with low levels of education and limited media awareness. These narratives are spread both by traditional propaganda media, such as RT and Sputnik, and by online channels on Telegram, TikTok and YouTube. The anonymity and difficulties in content moderation on these platforms make it easy for conspiracy theories and disinformation to gain reach. Additionally, in occupied and pro-

Russian territories, messages consistent with Kremlin narratives are amplified, what increases social polarization.

People who are particularly susceptible to disinformation include the elderly, women with lower levels of education, rural residents, and people with a negative attitude toward the government. According to research, the older the respondent and the lower the level of education, the higher the acceptance of pro-Russian narratives. For younger social groups, such as children and youth in occupied territories, Russia runs paramilitary programs such as the "Yunarmia", which are aimed at indoctrinating and preparing for military service.

Vulnerability to "bazaar" information and conspiracy theories in Ukraine is a widespread problem affecting various social groups. The use of emotional messages, historical narratives, and absurd theories, combined with limited access to independent sources of information, creates favorable conditions for the spread of disinformation. In order to counteract this, it is necessary to increase the availability of media education and support independent sources of information, especially in regions with an increased risk of susceptibility to disinformation.

f) Recognition of religious institutions as sources of information

Religious institutions in Ukraine play a significant role in shaping public opinion and providing information, going beyond their purely spiritual functions. They use dedicated websites, social media, and radio and television platforms to inform their believers about issues related to community life, local events, and the international political situation. The diversity of faiths in Ukraine means that each religious group has its own news channels, which adapt the message to the specifics of their audience.

Catholic news media

The Catholic Church in Ukraine, both Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic, uses a variety of media to reach their believers. Examples include **EWTN Ukraine**, which offers religious and educational programs, and the **Credo.pro** portal, which provides theological articles and religious news. The Greek Catholic “**Zhyve telebachennya**” focus on liturgical broadcasts and spiritual education, strengthening the sense of unity among the community of believers.

Orthodox media

The diversity of Orthodox communities in Ukraine has led to the existence of many independent media. The Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), which promotes independence from the Moscow Patriarchate, operates the **Pomisna.info** portal, which provides both religious and social news. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), in turn, communicates with believers through the **Church.ua** website, often coming under fire for its alleged pro-Russian affiliations. Media such as **Religious Truth** analyze and expose Russian religious propaganda, providing alternative narratives.

Jewish media

The Jewish community in Ukraine also has an extensive media network. Portals such as **Hadashot** and **JewishNews** serve both an informational and integrative function, providing news about events in Ukraine and the life of the Jewish diaspora. Collaboration with international organizations such as the World Jewish Congress promotes global solidarity and support for the Ukrainian Jewish community.

Muslim media

The Muslim community in Ukraine uses platforms such as **Islam in Ukraine** and **Umma TV**, which promote intercultural education and provide information on religious

and social issues. The Crimean Tatar TV channel **ATR** is an example of media support for cultural and religious identity in the context of the conflict in Crimea.

Protestant media

Protestant religious communities use channels such as **Hope Channel Ukraine** and **Radio Emmanuel**, which combine spiritual and educational content. Their activities, although less intensive compared to Catholic and Orthodox media, aim to reach believers from different denominations and promote ecumenical values.

The influence of religious institutions on society

Religious institutions as sources of information continue to have a significant impact on society. Many religious media play a key role in building social and cultural identity, while also providing information on current events. On the other hand, religious institutions are also sometimes used as a tool for disinformation, especially by structures associated with the Moscow Patriarchate, which further complicates the information situation in Ukraine. Religious institutions in Ukraine play a significant role in the information system, especially in the face of the ongoing conflict. Their influence on local communities is difficult to overestimate, but the role they play in building narratives and managing information (or disinformation) requires more attention and analysis. Supporting independent and transparent religious media is crucial to strengthening social cohesion and counteracting manipulation in the sphere of information.

3. Key FIMI resources

a) Companies

In wartime conditions, Ukraine is struggling not only with disinformation and information manipulation, but also with hard actions, such as physical attacks on critical

infrastructure, terrorism, and pressure from external economic and geopolitical actors. Key economic sectors, such as energy, the arms industry, agriculture, and technology, are simultaneously becoming targets of warfare and arenas of international tensions. External influences in these areas have multidimensional effects, from destabilization of the economy to interference in Ukraine's sovereignty policy.

Energy, which is the basis for the functioning of the Ukrainian economy, remains one of the main targets of warfare and geopolitical pressure. Missile attacks on energy infrastructure, including power plants, transmission grids, and transformer stations, conducted by Russia, are aimed at depriving the population of access to electricity and heating, and destabilizing the functioning of the country in the winter. The Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant, one of the largest in Europe, remains in the hands of the occupying power, which not only threatens Ukraine's energy security, but also increases the risk of a nuclear catastrophe. External energy companies, such as Russia's Gazprom, are acting as political levers through control of gas supplies to Europe, which has a direct impact on the Ukrainian economy (despite the ongoing war, gas continues to flow through pipelines throughout Ukraine, which will end in January 2025). Ukraine will lose transit fees (Ukraine's revenue from transit fees amounted to \$1.2 billion in 2022 and \$0.8 billion in 2023, or about 0.5 percent of Ukraine's GDP), and it risks losing its strategic role as an energy partner for Europe. Furthermore, Ukraine's gas infrastructure, which is largely undamaged so far, could become a military target if Russian gas is not flowing through Ukrainian pipelines. Hungary, Slovakia and Austria oppose stopping gas transit through Ukraine, fearing disproportionate economic losses in such a scenario (they have multi-year contracts with Gazprom). However, a likely solution is that the interested parties are working on replacing Russian gas with Azerbaijani gas. This would practically not change anything in the contracts, since buyers from the EU would in practice buy gas from Russia via Azerbaijan. This shows how much pressure Russia is exerting on the countries of the European Union and Ukraine, still using Gazprom as a tool. In addition, international corporations such as Shell are withdrawing from Ukraine. In November 2024, Shell sold its shares in the gas station network to Ukrnafta¹.

¹ <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/antitrust/shell-exits-ukraine-market-and-sells-fuel-stations-to-ukrناfta>

The Ukrainian arms industry, represented by Ukroboronprom and other state and private companies, is a direct target of military operations and external pressure. The production of military equipment and the modernization of weapons are necessary to maintain the country's defense capabilities. The destruction of infrastructure of arms industry resulting from Russian missile attacks and sabotage significantly limits Ukraine's operational capabilities.

External arms manufacturers, such as the US Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, play a critical support role by providing military equipment and technologies, but at the same time they become indirect targets of Russia's strategy to undermine the unity of states supporting Ukraine. In the context of competition, Chinese arms companies in the MENA region, offering cheaper and often more accessible equipment, may pose a challenge to the stability of the Ukrainian sector.

Ukrainian technology companies, such as Grammarly and SoftServe, have played a key role in digital support of warfare and maintaining critical infrastructure. The IT sector in Ukraine is not only a target of cyberattacks from Russia, but also an arena of pressure from global technology corporations, such as China's Huawei and TikTok, whose activities can be used to collect data and conduct intelligence operations.

At the same time, Western technology companies, such as Google and Microsoft, provide Ukraine with support in the form of software, cybersecurity, and communication systems, which significantly strengthens the country's defense capabilities. However, their activities may be limited by lobbying by competitors and investment uncertainty in the conflict region. The Ukrainian agricultural sector, known as the "breadbasket of Europe," is a significant target for military action, especially attacks on logistics infrastructure such as Black Sea ports and grain storage facilities. Russian export blockades and disinformation efforts related to the quality of Ukrainian grain are aimed at weakening Ukraine's position in the global food market. External actors, such as Brazilian and American agrobusiness corporations, may pose an indirect threat by increasing their competition in the context of Ukraine's limited export capacity. In developing regions that

have traditionally been recipients of Ukrainian grain, Russian propaganda is using this crisis to strengthen its geopolitical position.

Harsh actions against key economic sectors of Ukraine, such as energy, arms industry, technology and agriculture, are an integral part of Russia's strategy. Physical attacks, terrorism and pressure from external economic and political actors are aimed at destabilizing Ukraine, both internally and in the context of its international relations. Effective protection of these resources requires coordinated international support, including supplies of military equipment, protection of critical infrastructure and investment in economic reconstruction.

b) NGOs

In the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play the role of both important actors supporting civil society and democratization, and tools of external influence that can contribute to destabilizing actions. The activities of these organizations cover a wide spectrum from humanitarian support, through countering disinformation, to participation in information and psychological operations. In some cases, especially in the case of organizations affiliated with third countries, NGOs can also pose a threat through activities supporting the interests of foreign states and undermining Ukraine's sovereignty.

Organizations such as Razom for Ukraine, the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Group (UHHRU) and Euromaidan SOS play a key role in shaping the resilience of Ukrainian society to external influences and in building social cohesion in the face of conflict. UHHRU monitors compliance with international human rights standards, documents violations and supports victims of the conflict. Razom for Ukraine, as an international humanitarian organization, provides military and humanitarian assistance and promotes Ukrainian culture, contributing to the strengthening of national identity.

These activities have a direct impact on the humanitarian, ideological and identity areas, while strengthening Ukraine's defense capabilities through the integration of international support.

Initiatives such as StopFake and the Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security of Ukraine (CSCISU) are pillars in the fight against Russian propaganda and disinformation. StopFake has been exposing false media narratives since 2014, while CSCISU focuses on analyzing and countering propaganda and educating society about media literacy.

These activities are of key importance in the security and ideological sphere, countering attempts to destabilize Ukrainian society through information manipulation. However, their effectiveness is sometimes limited by advanced tools used by opponents, such as automated disinformation and the use of artificial intelligence to create content.

Foreign NGOs, such as the Atlantic Council and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, influence international policy towards Ukraine through analyses and publications. They support Ukraine's strategic interests in the context of security and geopolitics, while shaping the global discourse around the conflict.

At the same time, organizations such as the Ruskiy Mir Foundation and the International Eurasian Movement use their NGO status to conduct destabilization activities, promoting pro-Russian narratives and neo-imperial ideologies. These organizations, although formally operating within civil society, are directly linked to the Russian state apparatus, acting as a tool of hybrid influence. Their activities include funding pro-Russian initiatives, organizing events promoting Russian culture and history, and spreading disinformation in international media.

Some NGOs are actively involved in information and psychological operations aimed at undermining the morale of Ukrainian society and manipulating public opinion on the international stage. Combined with physical actions, such as terrorist attacks or sabotage of infrastructure, these operations become a tool for multi-layered pressure

on Ukraine. An example is the activity of pro-Russian organizations in border regions, where they conduct propaganda campaigns and engage the local community in destabilizing activities.

NGOs play an important role in shaping the information and social space of Ukraine, but their influence is mixed. While many of them strengthen the resilience of Ukrainian society to external influences, others are tools in the hands of third countries to pursue geopolitical and destabilizing goals. In wartime conditions, NGOs can both support the construction of a democratic state and pose a threat through informational, psychological and other activities, which require constant monitoring and appropriate actions by the Ukrainian authorities along with the international community.

c) Opinion leaders

Opinion leaders, both in traditional and digital media, play a significant role in shaping narratives, influencing public perceptions, and implementing FIMI-related activities. In the context of Ukraine, their activities are particularly visible during armed conflict, where they use a variety of platforms to promote specific narratives, from support for Ukrainian sovereignty to destabilizing and pro-Russian actions. Opinion leaders can both support Ukrainian information resilience and serve as a tool for conducting information and psychological operations. In some cases, their activities are associated with physical threats, such as terrorism or sabotage.

Pro-Russian opinion leaders play a key role in spreading disinformation and justifying Russian aggression against Ukraine. The activities of figures such as Anatoly Shariy, Yuri Podoliak, and Semyon Pegov (WarGonzo) involve using digital platforms such as Telegram and YouTube to propagate the Kremlin's narrative. For example, Shariy, accused of high treason, uses his channel to criticize the Ukrainian authorities and legitimize Russian military actions, which influences international perceptions and destabilizes Ukrainian public opinion.

Figures such as Yevgeny Poddubny and Vladimir Solovyov use traditional Russian media to spread disinformation on a global scale. Their publications reinforce Russia's ideological and geopolitical goals while undermining democratic values and political processes in Ukraine. These activities have a significant impact on information security and national identity, especially in border regions and occupied territories.

On the other hand, opinion leaders such as Yuri Butusov, Anton Herashchenko, and Dmytro Gordon play a key role in shaping pro-Western and democratic narratives. Known for his sharp commentary and military analysis, Butusov focuses on critical analysis of events on the frontlines, providing both Ukrainian society and international audiences with reliable information. Herashchenko, a former deputy interior minister, uses his platforms to provide updates from the frontlines and analysis of events, strengthening a sense of national unity.

In traditional media, leaders such as Pavlo Kazarin and Dmytro Gordon use TV and YouTube to discuss key geopolitical and social issues, which supports education and social mobilization. Their actions have an impact on ideological, identity, and geopolitical areas.

Foreign opinion leaders also have a significant impact on narratives about Ukraine. Figures such as Tucker Carlson (United States) and Marine Le Pen (France) use their platforms to promote narratives that undermine support for Ukraine in Western countries. While they do not always act directly on Russia's orders, their statements fit into pro-Russian rhetoric, which weakens international solidarity with Ukraine.

In turn, journalists and analysts associated with think tanks such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Atlantic Council provide reliable analysis and support international efforts on behalf of Ukraine, strengthening its position in the geopolitical debate.

Some opinion leaders, especially those operating in occupied territories, may be directly involved in operations supporting warfare, such as sabotage or social mobilization in favor

of hostile forces. An example are individuals associated with the idea of “Novorossiia” such as Oleg Tsaryov, who support Russian goals both in the information space and through logistical activities. Their activity, combined with the spread of disinformation and manipulation of public opinion, increases the potential physical threats to Ukrainian infrastructure and national security.

Opinion leaders are an important element in the FIMI space of operations, influencing both information and psychological processes. Their activities can support democratic values and the sovereignty of Ukraine, but also contribute to destabilization by promoting pro-Russian narratives and engaging in destabilization operations. In wartime conditions, it is especially important to monitor their activity and counteract harmful influences in order to minimize threats to Ukraine's sovereignty and integrity.

d) Religious leaders

Religious leaders play an important role in Ukrainian social life, influencing not only spiritual and moral aspects of life, but also political, social and informational issues. In the context of FIMI, their activities can both strengthen Ukrainian resistance to manipulation and serve as a tool for destabilization actions, especially when they are linked to external interests of external entities, such as Russia.

Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, plays a key role in promoting the ideology of the “Russian world”, which justifies Russian aggression against Ukraine. In his statements, Kirill has repeatedly supported the Kremlin’s narratives, combining religious and political rhetoric, which strengthens the pro-Russian attitude among the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP). Although the church formally declares its autonomy, it remains under significant influence from Moscow, which is controversial in Ukraine.

The influence of Kirill and the UOC-MP hierarchy extends to ideological, identity, and geopolitical areas, as their actions undermine Ukrainian sovereignty and support Russian

interests in the region. The use of religion as a tool to legitimize warfare and manipulate information is particularly visible in the regions of eastern Ukraine and Crimea. In turn, Patriarch Epiphanius, the head of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), has played a leading role in building Ukrainian national identity and religious independence from Moscow. His activities symbolize the rejection of Russian influence and promote the unification of Ukrainian society around national and democratic values. The OCU actively supports humanitarian efforts and counters pro-Russian narratives, making him one of the pillars of Ukraine's information resilience.

Catholic clergy such as Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, also play a significant role in strengthening Ukrainian national identity and building international solidarity. His speeches emphasize the need for humanitarian and political support for Ukraine, which has an impact on the humanitarian and geopolitical spheres.

External religious leaders such as Pope Francis, who has repeatedly called for peace and condemned violence in Ukraine, also play an important role. While his approach is neutral, some criticize his failure to clearly identify Russia as the aggressor, which could be interpreted as a lack of full support for the Ukrainian cause.

In turn, Muslim leaders such as Mufti Said Ismagilov, who heads the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine (DUMU), support Ukrainian efforts to defend the country and counter Russian propaganda, particularly in the context of the Crimean Tatars. International Islamic organizations supporting DUMU, such as those from Turkey and Qatar, further strengthen Ukrainian Muslim communities, which affects the humanitarian and identity areas.

Religious leaders, especially those associated with Russia, are often used in information and psychological operations aimed at influencing public opinion both in Ukraine and abroad. The statements of Kirill and pro-Russian hierarchs of the UOC-MP are an example of the combination of religious rhetoric with political manipulation, which can lead to the escalation of social and political conflicts. Religious leaders play a key role in shaping the

narrative and public opinion in Ukraine, both domestically and internationally. While some strengthen Ukrainian sovereignty and identity, others support pro-Russian narratives and contribute to the destabilization of the country. Monitoring the actions of these leaders and counteracting their negative influence is crucial to building Ukraine's information and social resilience in the face of the ongoing conflict.

e) Political leaders

Political leaders play a key role in shaping domestic and international politics, making them important elements in the FIMI analysis. In times of war in Ukraine, their actions can both support Ukrainian sovereignty and contribute to destabilization through information operations, psychological operations, and even active support for the military and geopolitical actions of Ukraine's adversaries. Political influence extends beyond individual states to include international organizations, political parties, and alliances, which increases the complexity of their impact.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is a central figure in Russia's strategy of information manipulation and interference. Under his leadership, Russia has deployed a complex propaganda apparatus, including media, diplomacy, and agents of influence, aimed at destabilizing Ukraine and undermining its sovereignty. Within the FIMI, Putin uses both hard military actions, such as armed aggression, and soft power, engaging leaders of other countries to promote pro-Russian narratives. Putin's influence is particularly visible in the geopolitical, ideological, and security spheres, which poses a direct threat to Ukrainian territorial integrity.

President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China is officially neutral towards the conflict, but China supports Russia in the economic and political spheres, including avoiding sanctions and promoting the narrative of a multipolar world order. China's policies influence Ukraine in the economic and geopolitical spheres, as they limit the effectiveness of international pressure on Russia and complicate Ukraine's diplomatic efforts.

In the United States, President Joe Biden actively supports Ukraine by providing military, humanitarian, and financial aid. The assumption of office by Donald Trump, known for his more isolationist approach, is unlikely to change anything in terms of humanitarian issues and the United States' official support for Ukraine, but it may have an impact on changing military support. Trump has repeatedly expressed skepticism about American involvement in international conflicts. After meeting with President Volodymyr Zelensky in the presence of President Emmanuel Macron in Paris in early December this year Trump has stated that he is actively working to end the war. He has also called on Vladimir Putin to take action to immediately establish a ceasefire with Ukraine. There is a risk that Trump's actions could weaken international pressure on Russia and increase the risk of FIMI by increasing pro-Russian narratives in the US.

The European Union as a whole is one of Ukraine's key allies, but individual member states have shown varying approaches. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán openly opposes tough sanctions against Russia, which weakens EU unity and strengthens pro-Russian narratives in Central and Eastern Europe. His actions affect the geopolitical and security arenas, reducing the effectiveness of EU actions against Russia.

In turn, leaders of Eurosceptic parties, such as Marine Le Pen in France or representatives of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), promote narratives that weaken support for Ukraine in their countries, which has a direct impact on international military and financial aid. These actions strengthen FIMI in Europe by undermining the coherence of EU policy.

In neighboring Belarus and North Korea, leaders such as Alexander Lukashenko and Kim Jong-Un play a significant role in Russia's influence strategy. Lukashenko provides Russia with logistical support and makes his territory available for military operations, which affects security and geopolitical areas. Kim Jong-Un, although geographically distant, supports Russia with munitions and military technology, which strengthens Russia's offensive capabilities in the conflict.

In turn, leaders of countries such as Poland, Lithuania, and Romania play a key role in building international support for Ukraine, providing humanitarian and military aid and increasing diplomatic pressure on Russia. Their actions focus on humanitarian, security, and geopolitical areas.

Political leaders, both enemies and allies of Ukraine, have a key influence on the dynamics of the conflict and the effectiveness of FIMI-related activities. Their actions affect a wide range of areas, from security to ideology, shaping not only current events, but also the future of Ukraine and its place in the international arena. Monitoring these influences and responding appropriately is crucial to protecting Ukrainian sovereignty and maintaining global solidarity in the face of Russian aggression.

f) Military leaders

Military leaders play a key role in shaping the dynamics of the conflict in Ukraine, both through direct actions on the battlefield and through influencing the information sphere and psychological operations. In the context of the FIMI their actions range from direct military support to manipulation of public perceptions that can destabilize the political and social situation. Military leaders from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and other countries play diverse roles that affect Ukraine's security, geopolitics, and national identity.

The leading role in Russia's military strategy rests with figures such as General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Command of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Gerasimov is the architect of a hybrid doctrine (chaos theory, known as the Gerasimov Doctrine), which combines military action with information and psychological operations, including disinformation campaigns aimed at destabilizing Ukraine and its allies. Russian commanders such as Sergei Surovikin (known as General Armageddon), famous for his brutal campaigns in Syria and Ukraine, have implemented strategies of intimidation and destruction of civilian infrastructure that have both military and psychological dimensions.

Their actions affect the security, geopolitical and ideological spheres, reinforcing the Russian narrative of the need to “denazify” Ukraine and undermining its sovereignty in the international arena.

General Valery Zaluzhny, former Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, has long been a symbol of effective and organized defense of Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression. His strategy was based on the integration of modern technologies, international support and adaptability, which significantly influenced the effectiveness of the Ukrainian resistance. Zaluzhny actively participated in information campaigns, strengthening morale both in the country and among Ukraine’s international allies. General Oleksandr Syrsky, the current Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, played a key role in the Ukrainian resistance to Russian aggression, especially in the defense of Kyiv and in the counteroffensive in the Kharkiv region in 2022. His appointment in February 2024 was part of a broader strategy by the Ukrainian military command to better adapt to the rapidly changing conditions on the frontlines. Syrsky, known for his effective command, remains a key figure in Ukraine's defense strategy.

The actions of the Ukrainian military leadership affect the security, geopolitical and identity areas, strengthening the image of Ukraine as a state capable of effectively defending itself against Russian aggression.

Belarus, under the leadership of Alexander Lukashenko, plays a significant role in Russia's military strategy, providing its territory for offensive operations and as a logistical base. General Viktor Gulevich, and after him Pavel Muraveyko, as heads of the General Command of the Belarusian Armed Forces, are key figures in coordinating support for Russian operations, although Belarus formally avoids direct involvement in military operations. The actions of Belarusian military leaders have an impact on the security and geopolitical arenas, as they support Russia’s strategy of destabilizing Ukraine without formally entering the war.

At the international level, NATO military leaders, such as General Christopher Cavoli, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), play a key role. His actions focus on

coordinating military support for Ukraine and deterring further Russian aggression against NATO's eastern flank. Military assistance includes arms deliveries, training Ukrainian soldiers, and sharing intelligence, which strengthens Ukraine's defense capabilities.

However, among external leaders, there are also figures promoting narratives that limit support for Ukraine, such as some Chinese military leaders who indirectly support Russian actions through the transfer of military technology and resources.

Russian military commanders, supported by specialized units, conduct sophisticated information campaigns aimed at disinforming both Ukrainian society and international public opinion. Examples include false reports of Russian military "victories" or manipulations of Ukrainian losses, which are intended to weaken the morale of defenders and divide Ukraine's allies.

Military leaders play a multidimensional role in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, both as leaders of military operations and as key actors in information and psychological operations. Their actions have a direct impact on security, geopolitics, and identity processes. Monitoring this influence and countering manipulation is crucial in protecting the interests of Ukraine and its international allies.

g) Traditional media

Traditional media play a key role in information manipulation and external interference (FIMI) processes. They are an effective tool in information and psychological operations, used to spread disinformation, reinforce narratives consistent with the interests of specific states or groups, and destabilize the opponent on the international stage. In the case of Ukraine, both domestic and foreign media are important, especially Russian media, which implement the Kremlin's strategic propaganda goals.

Channels such as RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik have long been involved in spreading pro-Russian narratives on the international stage. Russia uses them to undermine trust in

Ukrainian state institutions, spread false information about alleged neo-Nazi tendencies in Ukraine, and undermine international support for Ukraine. The mechanisms for bypassing sanctions imposed on RT, including the creation of so-called mirror sites, indicate highly advanced technical and adaptive methods used to maintain access to audiences in Europe and around the world. The sphere of influence of such activities is primarily geopolitical, ideological, and regards identity matters.

In Ukraine, the key role in countering Russian propaganda is played by the state broadcaster Suspilne. Through the United News project, which combines public and private media, Ukraine has created a platform for coordinating its coverage during the war, which has allowed it to counter disinformation and provide a unified, credible picture of the situation on the frontlines. Cooperation with international partners such as Deutsche Welle and Radio Free Europe supports the fight against disinformation and the promotion of the Ukrainian narrative in the international arena.

Western media such as BBC Ukrainian, CNN and The New York Times play a significant role in shaping the international perception of the conflict, while also being a source of analysis and opinion that influences Ukrainian society and the political elite. Their activities in the field of security and geopolitics are particularly important in the context of maintaining international support for Ukraine.

Channels such as 1+1 and Inter TV are strongly influenced by oligarchs, which often leads to the politicization of their coverage. In the past, these media have been used to promote specific political narratives, which can weaken Ukrainian unity in the face of Russian aggression. At the same time, oligarchic media are sometimes used to pursue economic interests, which ties them to the area of economic and political influence.

Traditional media, both in Ukraine and abroad, remain a key resource in FIMI processes. Their role goes beyond disinformation to include broadly understood information and psychological operations. The actions of Ukrainian and international partners aimed at limiting the influence of Russian media and strengthening the independence of the Ukrainian media sector are crucial to counteracting external interference.

h) Non-traditional media

Non-traditional media are an important resource in Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) strategies. In the context of the conflict in Ukraine, their nature, mode of operation and goals vary depending on the affiliations and interests they represent. On the one hand, we can observe the use of these media as tools for spreading propaganda, disinformation and strengthening geopolitical and ideological influence. On the other hand, independent and pro-Ukrainian media play a key role in countering disinformation and informing society. The areas of influence of these activities include the spheres of security, geopolitics, national identity, as well as ideological issues. Russian non-traditional media such as Tsargrad.tv and Readovka focus on promoting pro-Russian narratives. Their main goal is to destabilize Ukraine internally by undermining trust in the authorities, promoting separatism, and strengthening social divisions. Tsargrad.tv, using nationalist and religious messages, aims to ideologically strengthen the pro-Russian electorate in the region. In turn, Strana.ua, despite its Ukrainian origins, has been repeatedly accused of cooperating with pro-Russian interests by publishing content consistent with the Kremlin's narrative. After the Ukrainian government imposed sanctions, Strana.ua changed domains and moved to alternative platforms such as Telegram, continuing to publish content that undermines the political stability of Ukraine. Both examples show a clear FIMI pattern: their activities focus on information manipulation and psychological operations aimed at weakening morale and dividing Ukrainian society.

In parallel, independent media such as Hromadske.TV play a key role in informing both Ukrainian society and international audiences. Supported by international grants and donations, Hromadske.TV operates to document war events and counter disinformation. This is an example of media using modern communication channels such as YouTube to promote reliable information, which strengthens the public's resistance to FIMI operations. This activity has geopolitical character and is identity-based, as it reinforces

the Ukrainian narrative on the international stage and supports the pursuit of information sovereignty.

Platforms such as Telegram and TikTok also play a strategic role in information warfare. Anonymous pro-Russian channels such as Rybar and Z-патриот deliberately use disinformation and emotional manipulation to influence international perceptions of the conflict and build a narrative of legitimizing Russian military actions. Such content has both geopolitical and security implications, as it can influence the political decisions of Ukraine's allies and weaken their determination to provide support.

At the same time, platforms such as TikTok, thanks to their popularity among younger users, have become a place of intense narrative warfare. Patriotic materials, such as videos documenting the successes of the Ukrainian army, compete with pro-Russian content glorifying the actions of the Russian army. These narratives affect ideological and identity spheres, influencing young generations and shaping their perception of the conflict.

In the context of the conflict in Ukraine, non-traditional media are a key element of FIMI activities, both in terms of propaganda and counteracting its effects. Their importance in shaping public opinion, building narratives and influencing political and social processes makes them one of the most important resources of contemporary information warfare.

i) Academic and scientific cooperation

Academic and scientific cooperation between universities and research institutes from Ukraine and their foreign partners plays an important role in building international relations, exchanging knowledge and supporting innovation. It can also be a field for activities within FIMI, including information manipulation, psychological operations or exerting hidden geopolitical, ideological and security influence.

One of the key threats in the context of FIMI is the involvement of scientific institutions from countries that pursue hostile policies towards Ukraine, such as Russia. Academic cooperation with Russian universities has traditionally been developed, but since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, and especially after the escalation of the conflict in 2022, it has been significantly limited by sanctions and political decisions. Nevertheless, there is still a risk of maintaining hidden channels of cooperation that can be used to obtain strategic information, such as data on the Ukrainian energy sector, military technology, or critical infrastructure. Such activities may include exchange programs, joint scientific research, or participation in international conferences, during which sensitive information is obtained.

The area of ideological and geopolitical influence is also revealed in the context of cooperation with universities and organizations from China. Chinese initiatives such as Confucius Institutes, although officially promoting Chinese culture and language, are criticized for hidden propaganda goals and exerting influence on academia. In the case of Ukraine, they can be used to promote narratives consistent with Beijing's interests, such as neutrality towards the Russian-Ukrainian conflict or criticism of Western involvement in the region.

Academic cooperation is also susceptible to actions aimed at weakening Ukraine's internal cohesion and undermining trust in its institutions. By supporting pro-Russian narratives in the academic community or manipulating research results, external actors can influence the national identity and ideology of Ukrainian intellectual elites. A particular threat here is research programs financed by international funds of unclear sources, which can be used to pursue political, not scientific, goals.

Dangers to scientific cooperation also arise from intelligence activities conducted by foreign states. Universities can be a place to recruit agents, collect intelligence data, or install malware in university systems. Areas related to modern technologies, biotechnology, nuclear energy, and defense are particularly vulnerable.

In the context of war in Ukraine, academic cooperation is not only a space for potential threats, but also an opportunity to combine international efforts to analyze and counteract Russia's actions. One example of such involvement is the project "Legal analysis of Russia's actions in Ukraine since 2014 in terms of crimes of aggression, war crimes and genocide and legal solutions of countries neighboring with Ukraine regarding the status of Ukrainian citizens" conducted by the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) with funds from the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, involving experts from various universities in European countries, including Poland, Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Hungary, Georgia, Macedonia and Norway. The project covers three key research areas: an analysis of Russia's actions in the light of international law, an examination of the legal status of Ukrainian citizens during the conflict, and an assessment of the EU's migration policy and its effectiveness towards Ukrainian citizens.

Academic and scientific cooperation, although it carries certain risks in the context of FIMI, is also a key element of strengthening Ukraine in the international arena. International academic projects show that responsibly conducted cooperation can result in tangible benefits, such as increasing international awareness, countering disinformation, and supporting Ukraine's pursuit of justice under international law. In order to fully utilize the potential of such initiatives, it is necessary to implement mechanisms for verifying scientific partners, monitoring sources of research project funding, and raising awareness among academic staff and students about disinformation and intelligence threats. These activities not only minimize the risk of scientific institutions being used for information manipulation purposes, but also strengthen their resilience and ability to take effective measures to counter foreign influence. In this way, scientific cooperation can become not only a development tool, but also a strategic resource in the fight against geopolitical threats.

j) Military cooperation and non-state military formations

Military cooperation and the involvement of non-state military formations have a significant impact on Ukraine's security situation, its defense capabilities, and regional

geopolitical dynamics. External support, both institutional and informal, plays a key role in countering Russian aggression, but also poses challenges that can lead to information manipulation (FIMI) and destabilizing influences on domestic and regional politics.

Military cooperation between Ukraine and NATO includes training, military equipment supplies, and strategic advice. This partnership contributes to the modernization of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, increasing their defense capabilities. NATO provides Ukraine with military equipment, air defense systems, and logistical support, which is crucial for maintaining combat capabilities in the face of intense conflict. The area of influence of this cooperation covers both security and geopolitics, not only strengthening Ukraine's position in the international arena, but also provoking aggressive reactions from Russia, which in its propaganda accuses NATO of escalating the conflict.

One of the more visible elements of cooperation is non-state formations, such as the International Territorial Defense Legion of Ukraine, which consists of volunteers from different countries. These formations strengthen Ukraine's combat capabilities, but they can also be a tool for FIMI. Russian information operations often use the presence of foreign volunteers to create false narratives about mercenaries who supposedly pursue the interests of other states or organizations. Information and psychological operations against such formations aim to weaken morale, increase distrust of allies, and delegitimize Ukrainian defense efforts.

Non-state military formations that cooperate with Ukraine also include units such as Belarusian and Chechen volunteer battalions that fight on the Ukrainian side. Their activities often arouse extreme reactions in the media and are used by Russian propaganda to reinforce national and identity divisions. Russia accuses these groups of radicalism, which aims to disinform and manipulate public opinion, both in Ukraine and abroad.

On the other hand, non-state formations supporting Russia's actions, such as the Wagner Group, pose a direct threat to the security of Ukraine and the region. This group engages in military, information and psychological operations aimed at destabilizing the internal

situation in Ukraine and undermining its cooperation with international partners. The Wagner Group also conducts disinformation campaigns aimed at distorting the reality of the conflict, strengthening pro-Russian narratives and building the image of Ukraine as a state dependent on foreign sponsors. Military cooperation and the involvement of non-state military formations are crucial to strengthening Ukraine's defense and countering Russian aggression. In addition to volunteer and non-state formations, an important element of support is the activities of NATO, the European Union and the United States, including military training, weapons supplies and technological support.

Military training carried out by Western countries is the foundation for improving the combat capabilities of the Ukrainian army. In Poland, as part of the program to support the Ukrainian Armed Forces, intensive training is conducted in the military centers. By the end of 2023, Poland had trained thousands of Ukrainian soldiers in the use of modern military equipment, combat techniques and combat medicine. This training is often coordinated within the framework of the EU Military Assistance Mission to Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine), which includes operations in other EU member states, such as Germany, France and the Czech Republic.

The United States also plays a key role in training Ukrainian soldiers, mainly at its military bases in Germany and on US territory. Training programs run by the Pentagon include advanced courses in the use of HIMARS systems, air defense systems (including Patriot systems) and modern tanks such as the Abrams M1A1. This training focuses on improving the operational capabilities of the Ukrainian armed forces and their adaptation to NATO standards.

Supplies of military equipment and technologies play a fundamental role in strengthening Ukrainian defense capabilities. Poland has provided Ukraine with Leopard 2 tanks, Krab howitzers, Piorun missile systems and combat drones. This support is an important element of strengthening Ukraine's position on the front.

The United States has provided Ukraine with HIMARS multi-role launchers, Patriot air defense systems, M777 howitzers and advanced precision munitions. The total value of American military aid has exceeded \$40 billion since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. This support also includes the transfer of communication and surveillance systems, which allow for more effective military operations.

Other European countries, such as Germany, France, Great Britain and Scandinavian countries, have provided various types of weapons, including anti-tank systems (NLAW, Javelin), small arms, ammunition and armored vehicles. Germany has also provided IRIS-T air defense systems, which play a key role in protecting Ukraine's critical infrastructure from missile attacks.

Ukraine's military support has become a target of information and psychological operations conducted by Russia. Kremlin propaganda narratives focus on portraying Western support as an escalation of the conflict and interference in Ukraine's sovereignty. Disinformation also includes false claims about alleged trade in Western-supplied arms and the threat it may pose to neighboring countries. On the other hand, Ukraine actively uses military support in its information campaigns, emphasizing cooperation with NATO and the EU as a symbol of unity and international solidarity. Strengthening Ukraine's defense capabilities with foreign support helps to boost morale in both society and the armed forces.

4. Selected techniques and tactics of manipulation, linguistic mechanisms of persuasion, psychological actions and effects - identification and analysis

Multifunctional strategies of influence

Monitoring Russian propaganda activities reveals complex disinformation and adaptation mechanisms that aim to destabilize societies and manipulate public opinion both at home and abroad. Analyses have shown that Russian propaganda performs a debunking and disinformation function, which consists in transmitting false information in order to disorient society and demotivate it in the scope of activities directed at external recipients. These activities use black and gray propaganda. Another key element is the adaptation and motivational function, which through psychological influence creates attitudes consistent with Russia's expectations. The language of Russian propaganda is characterized by dual-value and arbitrariness, which allows for a clear presentation of manipulative content in categories of good and evil. Manipulation of euphemisms and hyperbole allows for dynamic adaptation of propaganda, creation of counter phrases that neutralize the “unfavorable” impact of facts and reinforcement of misleading narratives of the Kremlin’s apparatus of influence.

Functions of Russian persuasion:

- Disclosure and disinformation: It consists in undermining the credibility of information sources independent from the Kremlin, while disseminating false information in order to sow confusion and inspire actions contrary to the facts.
- Adaptive and motivational: It aims to strengthen the conviction among recipients that Russia’s actions are right and to negate any external actions that are undesirable from Moscow’s perspective.
- Informational and shaping: It is the basic function of disinformation, consisting in reaching recipients with appropriately crafted messages in order to influence their attitudes and behaviors.

The mechanisms of persuasion used by Russia in the information warfare against Ukraine and its allies are complex. The evolution of Russia's persuasion mechanisms in the context of the conflict with Ukraine reflects dynamic adaptation to changing military and political realities and the international community's reactions. Since the beginning of the aggression in 2014, and especially after the full-scale invasion in February 2022, the persuasion mechanisms have gone through different phases, each of them corresponding to the current strategic and psychological needs of the Kremlin and its allies.

Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia has begun to intensify its information operations as part of a broader strategy to destabilize Ukraine and influence international public opinion. During this period, the main goal of propaganda narratives has been to justify military actions as a response to alleged threats from Ukraine and its Western allies.

Protection of the Russian population and Russian minority in Ukraine: Persuasion that Russia's actions are aimed at protecting the Russian-speaking population in eastern Ukraine from persecution by the Ukrainian government.

Demonization of Ukraine as a fascist and Nazi state: Demonization of Ukraine by presenting it as a fascist and neo-Nazi regime, with the aim of delegitimizing its actions on the international stage and inscribing this persuasion into the stereotype that the Kremlin's propaganda had previously built as an element of information preparation for armed aggression.

Disinformation about a "defensive war": A narrative presenting Ukraine and NATO as a direct threat to Russia's security, which was supposed to "justify" military preparations and military presence at Ukraine's borders.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was a turning point that forced the Kremlin to quickly adapt and develop subsequent propaganda narratives aimed

at legitimizing warfare and maintaining public support both within Russia and in the international arena.

Evolution of Russia's Propaganda Narrative

Pre-Invasion Phase: 2014 marked the beginning of a new phase in Russian-Ukrainian relations, when Russia illegally annexed Crimea and began supporting separatists in eastern Ukraine. During this period, persuasion focused on justifying these actions as a response to alleged threats to the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine and on building an image of Ukraine as a state influenced by fascism and neo-Nazism. Russia sought to present itself as the defender of these minorities, which aimed to legitimize its military actions both domestically and internationally.

Protection of the Russian People and Russian Minority in Ukraine: Claiming that Russia's actions were aimed at protecting the Russian-speaking population in eastern Ukraine from persecution by the Ukrainian government.

Declaration of Ukraine as Fascism and Neo-Nazism: Demonization of the Ukrainian government by portraying it as fascist and neo-Nazi regime, in order to delegitimize its actions on the international stage. Persuasion included tunneling the message through the indiscriminate use of the term "fascist junta" in official statements and state media.

NATO/Western Threat: Persuasion portraying NATO as a direct threat to Russia's security, was intended to "justify" military preparations and military presence at the borders. Russian media emphasize NATO's expansion eastward as an aggressive action aimed at surrounding Russia.

Demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine: Presenting the goals of the invasion as the alleged need to demilitarize Ukraine and remove alleged neo-Nazi influence in the Ukrainian government.

Russia as a defender of regional security: Presenting Russia as the main defender of stability and security in the region, contrasting with Ukraine, which was presented as aggressive. Persuasion based on creating images showing Russia as a country protecting ethnic and linguistic minorities from "Ukrainian nationalism." Persuasion included encouraging citizens to support the war effort through patriotic slogans and appeals to the duty of defense. For example, media campaigns calling for support for the Russian armed forces and defense of the homeland "from aggression." The persuasion used was and is aimed at creating a false image of Ukraine as an aggressor, creating the belief that Ukraine, supported by the West, is the main aggressor in the conflict, which was aimed at disinforming about the real causes of the war.

Demonization of the Ukrainian armed forces: The Ukrainian armed forces are presented as ineffective, incapable of defending the country, which is aimed at lowering public morale and encouraging them to abandon further resistance. Example: Publication of false reports about defeats and chaos in Ukrainian commands, aimed at discouraging support for the war.

Internal Mobilization: Propaganda focuses on building a sense of unity and common purpose in the face of external threats, with the goal of strengthening domestic support for the government and the war effort. Example: Patriotic campaigns promoting the idea of defending the homeland and encouraging citizens to support the war effort by purchasing Russian products and services. The Paralysis Method: Nuclear blackmail is just one element of the broader information strategy of the Russian Federation, which has been based on fear management and disinformation for years. Russia regularly uses psychological techniques to create fear and uncertainty among its audiences, and propaganda operations are a key tool in the Kremlin's arsenal. Their goal is to make Western societies doubt the wisdom of their own security policy and continue to support Ukraine. Since Russian tanks crossed the border into Ukraine in February 2022, Russia has used nuclear threats as a tool to deter the West from engaging in Ukraine's defense effort. Three days after the invasion began, Putin put Russia's nuclear forces on high alert, sending a clear signal that was meant to "credible" his nuclear blackmail propaganda. Since then, Russian officials have repeatedly threatened to use nuclear weapons, hoping

to intimidate the international community and curtail military support for Ukraine. Fear-based psychological warfare has a wide application in the Kremlin's strategy. Russia uses it both to manipulate public opinion in the West and to mobilize and discipline Russian society. Psychological tools have long been used in military operations - both at the strategic and tactical levels—to break the enemy's will to fight. Today, Russia is using fear to undermine the West's morale and decision-making capacity. The Russian method of information warfare, known as the “paralysis method,” is characterized by a multifaceted approach. Russia does not limit itself to informational activities – it simultaneously demonstrates its military power, adapts military operations to produce specific psychological effects, conducts propaganda, creates appearances and undertakes sabotage actions aimed at intimidating the enemy. Each of these actions is aimed at achieving specific effects in the psychological sphere, such as weakening the will to act, lowering morale, inducing a sense of helplessness and fear.

Besieged Fortress Syndrome: The Foundation of Russian Information Strategy

The besieged fortress syndrome has become a key element of social management in Russia since the Bolshevik era. This sociotechnical active measure, developed and adapted in every sphere of life during the Soviet era, continues to be the foundation of communication between the state and its citizens. It is currently used by the Kremlin to control multiculturalism, ethnic and religious society of Russia, in accordance with the interests of the Kremlin, and not necessarily the citizens themselves. It is a tool for controlling social behavior, where creating an atmosphere of fear is primarily the task of the political authorities of Russia, and its implementation is the responsibility of the media and propaganda apparatus.

Creating the Enemy: The Russian besieged fortress syndrome aims to create the image of an internal and external enemy through a constant search for enemies and a black-and-white division of the world into its own and foreign, the forces of good and evil. The Kremlin always places itself on the side of good, demonizing its opponents. This approach aims to lose the individual's instinct for self-preservation and subordinate it to the will of the state, with a readiness to make the highest sacrifices.

The influence of the Russian Orthodox Church and "geopoliticians-mystics"

Another important factor in this creation is the Russian Orthodox Church and geopoliticians-mystics, such as Alexander Dugin and his Eurasian movement. The Kremlin uses them to create delusions of Russia's special calling and megalomania among other states and nations. Additionally, the heroization of its own history, including the myth of the Great Patriotic War and the fight against fascism, and the sacralization of geography, strengthen the contemporary face of the Russian siege syndrome.

Currently, the Russian Federation is intensifying persuasion in the information space, using the syndrome of a besieged fortress in order to:

- **Relativize military defeats** - transform its own failures in the military domain in a way that minimizes their significance.
- **Consolidate and mobilize society** - mobilize citizens in the face of the ongoing military mobilization.
- **Justify the annexation of Ukrainian territories** - legitimize and illegally annex subsequent territories of Ukraine.
- **Declaring Western sabotage** – presenting Western countries, including Poland, as a source of sabotage and diversion of an aggressive factor - forcing Russia to "act against its will".

The Russian propaganda apparatus has recently been spreading a number of false theses aimed at strengthening the negative image of Poland and its actions in the international arena:

- Russia is not fighting Ukraine, but the West and NATO.
- Russia's territorial integrity is at risk.
- Russia must defend the "liberated territories".
- Polish mercenaries are a significant force fighting on Ukraine's side.
- NATO troops are participating in the defense operation in Ukraine.
- It is not Ukraine, but NATO that is leading the war.
- NATO is conducting a military operation against Russia in Ukraine.

The goals of these actions are complex. On the one hand, the goal is to consolidate society in the face of mobilization and to “justify” aggressive actions in the international arena, and on the other hand, to promote the image of Russia as a victim of aggressive NATO actions. In the Kremlin’s narrative, Russia is presented as a country under attack, which is only defending itself against external aggression. This approach aims to “justify” Russia’s aggressive military actions, both against Ukraine and in the international arena. In this way, the Kremlin tries to perpetuate the belief that its policies are right and necessary for maintaining national security.

Selected tools:

Control: Tight control over state media, which became the main source of propaganda. Media such as RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik were used to spread official narratives. Increased censorship and propaganda in state media, promoting official narratives via television, radio and the Internet.

Cyber operations: Attacks on Ukrainian media and information systems in order to disrupt independent information. Russian hackers conducted disinformation campaigns by creating fake websites and distribution networks (including automated) for disinformation content.

Use of social media: Mass creation of fake accounts and dissemination of disinformation to manipulate public opinion. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and VKontakte are heavily used to spread propaganda content. Extensive use of video and photographic materials aimed at demonizing the enemy and portraying Russia as a defender.

- **Operation "Russian Network"** - a large-scale disinformation campaign aimed at presenting Ukraine as an aggressive and unstable state, threatening regional security.

- **Campaign "Putin as a defender of the world order"** - international propagation of President Putin's speech and official statements presenting him as a leader striving to return Russia to its historical status as a superpower, ensuring "security".
- **"Russia Defends Europe" Campaign** - a narrative that portrayed Russia as the natural defender of Europe against NATO and Western aggression, with the aim of mobilizing international support.
- **"Poland as a Threat" Operation** - a campaign aimed at presenting Poland as an aggressive state that is cooperating with Ukraine to destabilize the region or annex western Ukraine. Using false information about Polish mercenaries and alleged Polish militaristic plans.

Extensive use of platforms such as Telegram, where you can control the flow of information and create dedicated propaganda channels. Example: Creating specialized groups on Telegram that regularly publish propaganda content that demonizes Ukraine and supports Russian military actions.

Fabricating Evidence - creating and distributing fake documents and videos that were supposed to support false narratives, such as the alleged participation of Polish mercenaries in armed conflicts. Example: Publishing fake military reports and photos from the front showing alleged actions of Polish mercenaries.

Using Deepfake Technology - implementing advanced technologies to create realistic but false visuals, aimed at misleading recipients.

Coalitions with the Belarusian apparatus of influence - cooperation with Belarusian propaganda organs to increase the reach and credibility of propaganda narratives in the international arena, organizing joint press conferences and information events with the participation of Belarusian media and official representatives. Cooperation in the use of provocations, active measures and exposure of propaganda persuasion in the

international arena. Cooperation with Belarusian "media" and organizations to increase the reach of propaganda. Belarusian media often support Russian narratives and provide additional sources of disinformation.

Influencers and "journalists" - Russia hires, bribes or uses special services to control influential people who, while faking "independence", propagate narratives consistent with the Kremlin line. These are often journalists, bloggers and media figures who cooperate with Russian propaganda media, e.g. bloggers and vloggers on platforms such as YouTube who regularly publish content supporting Russian narratives.

Separation operations - breaking alliances on the example of Poland: A key element of Russia's information strategy is historical resentment and negative aspects of the common past of both nations. The main goals of Russian persuasion include undermining trust in Polish intentions and discrediting Poland's actions on the international stage.

Heroization of "history" - heroization of history consists in glorifying past events and national figures, which aims to strengthen a sense of national pride and legitimize current political actions. In Russia, the myth of the Great Patriotic War and the fight against fascism is often referred to in order to "justify" and distort the perception of Russia's military aggression.

Sacralization of geography - sacralization of geography is the process of giving a territory a sacred meaning, which may include emphasizing historical and cultural connections with a given area. In Russian propaganda, sacralization of geography is used to justify the annexation of territories and to build a narrative about Russia's natural right to control certain regions.

Discrediting the resistance - a key element of Russian disinformation is the presentation of messages depicting the confrontation with Russia as weak and unable to effectively counteract it. Narratives about "disrupting Ukrainian forces" are intended to reinforce the image of Russia as a dominant force, while simultaneously seeking to lower morale in the

ranks of Ukrainian and Western recipients. This is a classic disinformation technique aimed at introducing chaos and a sense of helplessness on the part of the recipients.

Exposing alleged strategic advantage - in propaganda messages, Russia tries to present its army as professional, organized, and effective. Terms such as “consistent actions” and “cool head” are juxtaposed with the image of supposedly chaotic and disorganized Ukrainian actions. Such narratives are intended to build the image of the Russian command in the eyes of both Russian recipients and neutral observers.

Manipulating the perception of “inevitability” - messages such as “the breakthrough of the frontlines is only a matter of time” are intended to create the impression that a Russian victory is inevitable. This is a method of psychological pressure that, by building the illusion of superiority, aims to weaken the opponent’s determination and create an atmosphere of uncertainty and resignation.

Creating the illusion of perfection - the description of the Russian army’s actions as a “classic, slow operation” is intended to give the impression that all actions, including failures, are well thought out and professional, despite their actual ineffectiveness. Such narratives are intended to conceal failures and strengthen Russia’s image as a country with an effective military strategy.

Persuasion aimed at the perception of Poland in Ukraine

Russian resources and propaganda campaigns try to present Polish aid to Ukraine as an ulterior motive, suggesting that under the guise of humanitarianism, Poland is seeking to rebuild its lost empire and realize its great-power ambitions. As part of these activities, the following false narratives are being spread:

- **Organ trafficking disinformation** - spreading false information about alleged organ trafficking by Polish doctors with Ukrainian refugees.
- **Threats regarding Poland's plans for Ukraine** - promoting the thesis that Poland is seeking to revive the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with the

participation of external powers, such as NATO and the US, which is supposed to lead to the realization of the dreams of the lost empire.

- **Poles as a threat to Ukraine** - claiming that Poles pose a threat to the security, existence, and national and religious identity of Ukrainians.
- **Territorial claims and annexation of Western Ukraine** - promoting false information about Polish territorial claims and the alleged "creeping annexation" of parts of Ukraine.
- **Poland's ambitions supported by the US** - the belief that regardless of how the situation develops, Poland, with the support of the US, is pursuing its ambitions to occupy Western Ukraine.

By spreading false information and manipulating public opinion. The key goal of these information operations is to lend credibility to Russian disinformation claims about Poland's alleged plans for a referendum and annexation of Western Ukraine. Russian propaganda media use a variety of methods to bolster their narratives, including:

- **Staged and directed interviews** - presenting interviews with Ukrainians that are supposed to confirm alleged war crimes and other crimes committed by "Polish mercenaries" in Ukraine. The goal is to create the impression that Polish soldiers are responsible for actions against their own citizens.
- **Disinformation about crimes committed by Russian soldiers** - spreading information suggesting that actual military crimes committed by Russian soldiers are in fact committed by Poles or Ukrainians (rarely of other nationalities). This narrative is intended to divert attention from the real perpetrators.

The Kremlin's meta-narrative regarding Poland includes the following theses:

- **Poland as an aggressive and offensive country** - presenting Poland as a country with expansionist intentions that acts aggressively towards its neighbors.
- **Hidden great power goals under the guise of humanitarian aid** - claiming that Poland, while masking its actions as humanitarian aid, is in fact pursuing its own great power ambitions.

- **Support for terrorism** - accusing Poland of supporting terrorist activities in the region.
- **Poland as a destabilizing criminal state** - presenting Poland as a source of instability in the region through alleged criminal activities.
- **Poland as a threat to Russia** - presenting Poland as a direct threat to Russia's security.
- **Poles as inhumane criminals** - dehumanizing Poles by presenting them as ruthless and inhumane perpetrators of crimes.

Poland is one of the most important targets of Russian propaganda: Russian propaganda refers to historical events, such as the partitions of the Republic of Poland, and promotes narratives about "Polish imperialism" and the desire to expand into Belarus and Ukraine. Themes about the "Polish borderlands" are repeated as a natural area of geopolitical interest for Poland. The aim of these narratives is to arouse fear of Poland as a country striving to recreate historical borders and to create an image of the Republic of Poland as an aggressive and destabilizing peace in the region. Kremlin propaganda presents Poland as a threat to Russian security, based on manipulated information about Polish defense policy. Poland's defense actions are presented as an element of "militarization", suggesting that Poland is provoking Russia to war, which aims to distort the international image of Poland as a defensive country.

Demonization of Poland: Propaganda accuses Poland of provoking conflicts and "inciting" tensions on the Belarusian border. The aim is to present Poland as an aggressor, in line with the propaganda of Russia and Belarus, which aims to weaken Poland in the international arena and to lend credibility to disinformation about threats to Belarusian security from Poland. Russian propagandists combine disinformation about the threat from Poland with falsifying the image of the forced migration mechanism used by Russian and Belarusian services against Poland. The disinformation campaign concerns the migration pressure directed against Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, presenting Poland as the party escalating tensions. By accusations of destabilizing Belarus Poland and Lithuania are presented as countries supporting terrorists and actions destabilizing Belarus. The propaganda refers to the Belarusian opposition, de legitimizing its actions

against the regime of Alexander Lukashenko. This is an attempt to present Poland as a "pawn" in the hands of the West, which interferes in the internal affairs of Belarus. Since the beginning of the outbreak of opposition protests in Belarus after the rigged presidential elections, Belarus and Russia have been conducting coordinated propaganda activities aimed at presenting the Belarusian opposition as inspired from abroad, terrorists or a tool of hybrid warfare, especially from Poland and Lithuania. Propaganda presents Poland as a country that is increasing its military potential in order to dominate Eastern Europe. This narrative is part of the broad activity of Russian propaganda on the "militarization" of Poland and NATO countries, aimed at presenting Poland as a military threat to Ukraine.

Divide and rule:

In addition to operations discrediting Poland in the eyes of Ukraine, Russian influence operations are aimed at selected social groups in Poland, to whom Ukraine is presented in a negative light using selected, often framework persuasion.

Russian propaganda is spreading a number of false narratives that aim to portray Ukrainians as a threat to Poland. The most important of these include:

- **The presence of Ukrainian flags on state buildings** – presented as a symbol of the Ukrainian occupation of Poland.
- **The assignment of PESEL numbers to refugees** – interpreted as an attempt to create Ukrainian political parties and gain access to Polish digital services and benefits.
- **The use of Ukrainian in public spaces** – perceived as an action aimed at assimilating Poles and bringing Poland under Ukrainian control.
- **Ukrainians as a threat** – claims that Ukrainians threaten the security, existence, and national and religious identity of Poles.
- **Ukraine's territorial claims** – false information about alleged plans to annex part of Poland by Ukraine.

- **Ungrateful and demanding refugees** – accusations that Ukrainians are demolishing Polish apartments, stealing Poles' husbands, and taking over the job market and social assistance.
- **Ukrainian takeover of the job market** – claims that Ukrainians are effortlessly taking Polish jobs thanks to subsidies.
- **Manipulation in business** – suggesting that Ukrainian inscriptions on products are a tool for taking over Poland.

Russian propaganda operations also engage Polish organizations and citizens who promote content consistent with Kremlin narratives and take actions aimed at spreading disinformation. This cooperation allows for more effective reaching of a wide audience and increasing the credibility of false information. The main goal of these actions is to indifferent Poles to the fate of Ukrainians by creating an image of them as hostile and demanding. Russian narratives aim to build a sense of social, economic, existential, criminal, and identity threat. Propaganda aims to create the impression that Poles are losing control over their own homes, becoming second-class citizens. This in turn is intended to lead to increased social unrest and a permanent disruption of Polish-Ukrainian relations, which in the long term is intended to destabilize the situation in Poland.

A multidisciplinary and multidomain approach: Effective propaganda combines military, political, economic, and social elements, allowing for a comprehensive impact on various aspects of social and political life. Example: Combining the narrative of the NATO threat with the economic effects of sanctions and social concerns about refugees.

Continuity of action: Despite changes in narratives, key themes such as the demonization of Ukraine, the NATO threat, and Russia's role as a defender remain central, allowing for a consistent image of the conflict to be maintained. Example: Constant references to alleged NATO threats, regardless of current events on the frontlines or in the international environment.

Psychological mechanisms of propaganda influence

Inciting fear and uncertainty: Russian propaganda narratives often appeal to emotions of fear and uncertainty, which aims to weaken social resistance and increase susceptibility to manipulation.

Creating an image of constant threat: Presenting the conflict as a situation in which Russia is constantly threatened by external aggressors, which aims to justify warfare and mobilize citizens to support it. Example: Long-term propaganda operation alarming about alleged NATO plans to invade Russia.

Emotional manipulation: Using images and narratives that evoke strong emotions, such as fear, anger, or anxiety, which increases the effectiveness of the propaganda message. Propaganda films showing dramatic scenarios of threats to Russian families in the event of losing control over territories.

Framing the message of the fight between good and evil: Russian propaganda often presents the world in black and white categories, where Russia is always on the side of good and its opponents – on the site of evil. The Ukrainian authorities and their allies are presented as ruthless, aggressive and untrustworthy, which is intended to delegitimize their actions. Example: Narratives about "neo-Nazi regimes" in Ukraine, which are intended to provoke hostility and distrust towards the Ukrainian government. Building an image of the fight between "good" and "evil" (the West) is a permanent element of the Russian information aggression policy. The use of inverted logic of concepts makes it easier for Kremlin propagandists to cover up, on the one hand, and legitimize, on the other, the imperial policy of aggression with theses about the alleged "defense, the fight between good and evil". The apparatus of influence controlled by the Russian special services promotes materials intended to shape the (false) image of the Kremlin and Putin as "defending Russia" against evil, against Satan. The Kremlin uses this propaganda thread, among others, to sacralize the war and gain Russians' support for aggressive actions and deepen hostility towards NATO, including Poland. Russian propaganda consistently presents NATO's defense policy, or support for Ukraine's defense effort,

in the false light of alleged offensive actions, which are part of the planned "NATO invasion" of Russia.

Building the image of Russia as salvation: Presenting Russia as the last bastion of stability and order in the region, which is intended to strengthen the sense of national unity and support for the Kremlin's aggressive policies. Example: Disinformation campaigns presenting Russia as a country that is saving the world from chaos and aggression "induced by the West".

Psychological operations aimed at morale:

Manipulation and intimidation: Russian psychological operations aimed at the readiness of Ukrainian soldiers to resist Russian aggression cover a wide range of activities. Videos of combat operations, often staged using body-worn cameras, showing the alleged incapacitation of Ukrainian soldiers are used to intimidate and call for surrender. Propaganda calls for non-resistance, death intimidation, and flaunting the combat successes of the Russian military are aimed at demoralization and lowering the will to fight.

Elements of this operation are also directed at Polish-speaking recipients via websites involved in Russian disinformation operations in Poland. Such activities are aimed at, among other things, undermining trust in the Ukrainian defense operation, arousing anxiety among Ukraine's allies, and undermining public support for military donations.

Soldiers' health: A tool for emotional manipulation

This type of narrative is aimed at evoking sympathy and arousing negative emotions towards the Ukrainian command. Presenting Ukrainian soldiers as victims of irresponsible decisions by commanders is an attempt to undermine trust in the military, its intentions, and its ability to effectively defend the country. It should be emphasized that such reports are often staged by Russian military intelligence and

disseminated by the Russian Ministry of Defense, which further emphasizes their propaganda nature.

Mobilization Deficiencies: The Narrative of Desperation

Claims of mobilization deficiencies and the sending of sick soldiers to the frontlines suggest desperation and irresponsibility on the part of the Ukrainian command. Such propaganda messages are intended to portray the Ukrainian Armed Forces as disorganized and unable to effectively manage their human resources. Such disinformation, produced and distributed by the Russian Ministry of Defense, is intended to undermine morale among soldiers and discourage public opinion from supporting the war effort.

Losses and Poor Planning: Undermining Competence

Information about large losses in personnel and equipment and poor planning of war operations. Such information is intended to emphasize alleged incompetence, which can lead to weakening soldiers' trust in their superiors and reducing their determination to fight. Such disinformation, carefully prepared by Russian military intelligence, is also used to reinforce the message about the effectiveness of Russia's military operations.

The decision to surrender: An attempt to demoralize

The narrative of surrendering to save one's life is a particularly powerful propaganda element. It aims to discourage other soldiers from continuing to fight, suggesting that surrender is the only rational choice in the face of a hopeless situation. Such messages, staged and promoted by the Russian Ministry of Defense, can lead to demoralization and undermine the resolve of Ukrainian soldiers.

Propaganda techniques and their impact

1. Appeal to emotions: Describing the health problems and difficult situation of soldiers evokes sympathy and negative emotions towards the command.
2. Manipulation: Exposing negative information about the state of health, losses and poor planning of military operations introduces uncertainty and fear.
3. Undermining authority: Criticizing the Ukrainian defense operation weakens its authority and credibility.
4. Attempt to demoralize: The surrender narrative is intended to discourage soldiers from fighting and undermine their morale.

Pressure tactics and calls to surrender: Pressure tactics and calls to surrender, implemented as part of a psychological operation, can include a variety of methods, including propaganda, disinformation, and manipulation of public opinion. The goal is to create a sense of inevitability of defeat, which is intended to lower morale and increase the likelihood of surrender. The Russians' goal is to lower the will to fight of the targets of this operation, reduce combat effectiveness, and increase the likelihood of surrender or retreat. Weakening the will to fight refers to a decrease in the determination, motivation, or willingness of individuals or groups to engage in combat or continue fighting. This can be influenced by various factors, including mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion. The Russians' goal is to weaken Ukraine's will to fight, reduce combat effectiveness, increase the likelihood of surrender or retreat.

Psychological tactics to demotivate the West: The Russian propaganda apparatus is intensifying its efforts to discourage Western societies from supporting Ukraine with military equipment. Using a variety of psychological tactics, the Kremlin is trying to create an image of military donations as a waste of resources, provoking further escalation of the conflict, and a direct threat to Western security. The goal of Russian propaganda is to weaken public support for Ukraine in Western countries. Using disinformation and manipulation, the Kremlin is trying to influence public opinion to pressure their governments to reduce aid to Kyiv.

Russian propaganda is working intensively to discourage Western societies from supporting Ukraine, presenting military donations as a waste of resources, a war provocation, and a source of its own economic problems. By creating a false image of the uselessness of the transferred equipment and blaming the West for the suffering of Ukrainians, the Kremlin is trying to weaken international support for Kyiv.

Creating the illusion of the uselessness of Western weapons: Russian propagandists regularly publish images and videos of destroyed military equipment supplied to Ukraine by Western countries. The aim of this is to create the impression that military aid is ineffective on the battlefield. Such content is intended to discourage Western societies from continuing to support Ukraine by suggesting that transferring weapons is a waste of money and an additional risk to their own security – both military and economic.

The myth of the invincible Russian army: As part of its propaganda campaign, the Kremlin constantly promotes the image of the Russian army as an invincible force capable of defeating any opponent. Reports of new, “indestructible” weapons systems are intended to convince the audience of the superiority of Russian military technology over Western counterparts. The propaganda materials emphasize Russia’s alleged superiority, presenting Western military donations as weak and doomed to destruction.

Fear of bankruptcy of Western economies: Russian propaganda also emphasizes the costs of military support for Ukraine, suggesting that it leads to the financial ruin of Western countries. These narratives are intended to raise opposition to the policies of governments supporting Kyiv, pointing to alleged cuts in social services, growing budget deficits and increasing public debt as consequences of financing arms supplies.

Blaming the West for Ukraine's suffering: Kremlin propagandists try to shift responsibility for the prolonged conflict and the related suffering of Ukrainians onto Western countries. Through the manipulative use of images of destruction and civilian casualties, they suggest that military donations provoke and escalate the war. Such attempts are intended to provoke discussion about the alleged responsibility of the West for the deaths and destruction in Ukraine.

Kremlin manipulation techniques

Creating the impression of Ukraine's defeat: By emphasizing Ukrainian losses and the destruction of Western military equipment, Russian propaganda tries to lower the morale of Western and Ukrainian societies, undermining confidence in the effectiveness of military donations.

Image manipulation: Russian propagandists often stage the destruction of Ukrainian equipment, obtaining footage from multiple angles of the same event. This footage is then repeatedly edited and presented as evidence of mass destruction, misleading the audience about the real situation on the front.

5. Propaganda, manipulation and disinformation activities aimed at the perception of the West and democratic values

Propaganda and disinformation directed against the West constitute one of the key elements of the Russian information operation against Ukraine. Such messages are aimed at arousing distrust towards Western countries, undermining trust in democratic values and leading to the exhaustion of support for Ukraine among its allies. In this context, Russia consistently creates a vision of the West as abusing its political and economic position, and at the same time internally divided, morally degenerate and lacking a coherent strategy towards the conflict.

One of the most important motives in this campaign is accusing the West of escalating the war. In various reports, Russian propaganda sees the "beneficiaries" of military operations in Great Britain, France and the United States, who are allegedly interested in prolonging the war in order to develop their own arms industry or pursue a policy of expansion at the expense of Ukraine. Such allegations also serve to reinforce the belief

that Russia is not just struggling with the Ukrainian army, but with the entire NATO. In turn, the Ukrainian authorities are presented as a tool for implementing Western interests, which, according to Kremlin propaganda, justifies Russia's offensive. At the same time, information is being propagated about the alleged weakness and inevitable decline of the West. The European Union is presented as an entity threatened by an energy and food crisis due to the sanctions imposed on Russia. It is pointed out that only Russian grain can "save" Europe from the specter of famine, and the sanctions, instead of hitting Moscow, are supposedly intended to destabilize the Western economy. This is accompanied by reports of internal disputes and divisions among the allied countries, emphasizing the lack of agreement on extending military and political aid. Examples include false stories about alleged threats to expel the United States from NATO, or fictitious reports that Western leaders, including the President of France, are supposed to be withdrawing support for Kyiv. Such theses are intended to create an impression of chaos and war fatigue on the part of democratic states.

Themes related to the alleged "moral degeneration" of the West also play a significant role in this narrative. Content is being spread suggesting that NATO soldiers and military instructors are committing crimes against civilians, which is an attempt to divert attention from Russian activities in Ukraine. False examples of growing sexual crime are cited, which are intended to further reinforce the belief that Western values are at odds with traditional social norms. Such messages are closely linked to the stereotype of Europe as "fallen" and without any real ability to support Ukraine - both morally and politically.

On the same level, messages are being spread about the hypocrisy of Western elites, allegedly caring only for their own interests and trying to divert public attention from the main problem, which is Russian aggression. According to propaganda, democratic states are supposed to be short-sighted – they initially decide to provide aid, but in the face of growing economic and political difficulties, they begin to withdraw from their promises. Such accusations allow Russia to simultaneously divide Ukraine's allies and perpetuate the impression among European societies that Kyiv's support contributes to the protracted crisis on the continent. A key element of this strategy is the discrediting of aid provided to Ukraine. Selected messages raise issues of alleged corruption of the

Ukrainian authorities, the sale of Western weapons on the black market, and the lack of financial transparency in spending funds. This is intended to create the feeling that no investment in Ukraine's defense brings the desired results – on the contrary, it would strengthen illegal structures. In turn, information about the alleged suspension of aid from the United States or European countries, despite real decisions, creates the impression of growing weariness with the conflict and a lack of faith in its successful resolution for Ukraine. The Kremlin narrative also includes historical themes aimed at entrenching the belief that the West is the heir to Nazi ideology. European support for Ukraine is therefore sometimes presented as support for an alleged neo-Nazi regime. Although such a view clearly distorts reality and history, it remains a powerful instrument for evoking emotional reactions among recipients, especially those living in the post-Soviet zone of influence and remembering the realities of World War II. Such associations undermine the moral legitimacy of the West to support Kyiv and allow Russia to portray itself as a “liberating” state fighting against contemporary fascism.

Russian propaganda narrative includes also messages, in which the authorities in Kyiv are presented as corrupt and striving for authoritarian control over society. Kremlin media and bloggers associated with them – including so-called “pseudo-Ukrainian” channels on social media platforms – convince that the President and Ukrainian politicians are acting solely for their own interests. Such content, which includes threads about the enrichment of relatives of high-ranking officials or the deliberate “destruction” of the Ukrainian nation, is an attempt to further undermine the credibility of the pro-Western authorities in Kyiv. At the same time, stories are being spread about children allegedly being forced to write propaganda eulogies in honor of the president or plans to use a “dirty bomb”, which additionally undermines the image of Ukraine as a country seeking real support in the democratic world.

These messages shows the complexity and multi-dimensionality of Russian disinformation operations. Many of them, reaching public opinion in Western countries, are intended to arouse fear of further military and political support for Kyiv, to fuel internal divisions in the coalition of Ukraine's allies, and to induce societies to revise their previous support. This strategy is based on the repetition of hundreds of scattered threads, some

of which concern alleged benefits of Western countries from prolonging the conflict, while others focus on presenting the West as close to economic and political implosion. Extensive narratives about corruption in Ukraine and the authoritarian tendencies of the local authorities are intended to complete the picture of a hopeless situation, in which only Moscow appears – from the perspective of propagandists – to be the “honest” side.

a) Externally motivated

Narratives aimed at the West

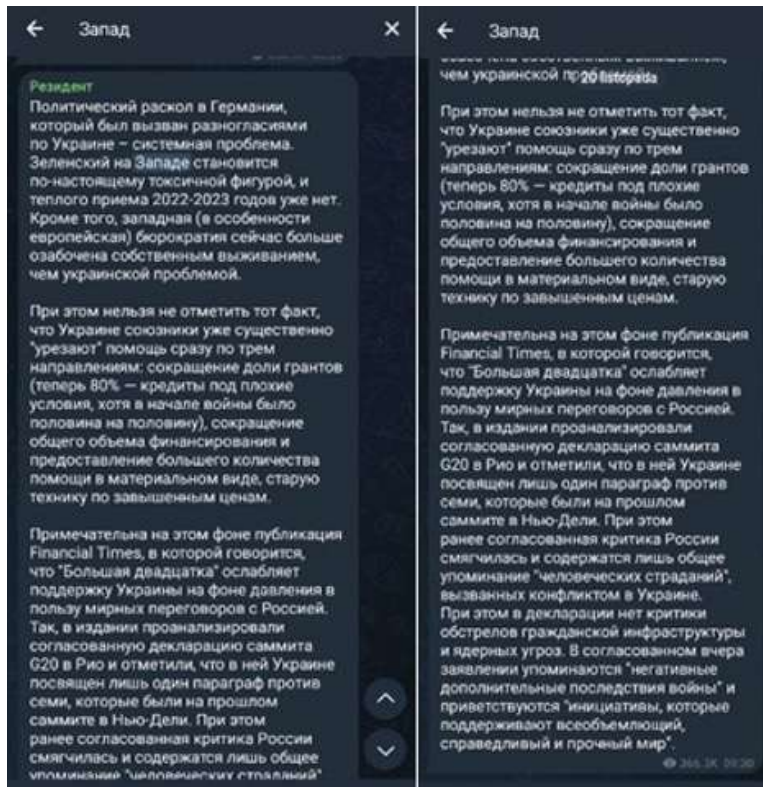
- **Europe as the cradle of Nazism:** Comparing NATO Admiral Rob Bauer to Hitler, emphasizing Europe's alleged invariability in promoting Nazism. This narrative is intended to undermine the moral legitimacy of NATO and the EU. Metanarrative: "Europe and NATO are the cradle of Nazism".



Source:

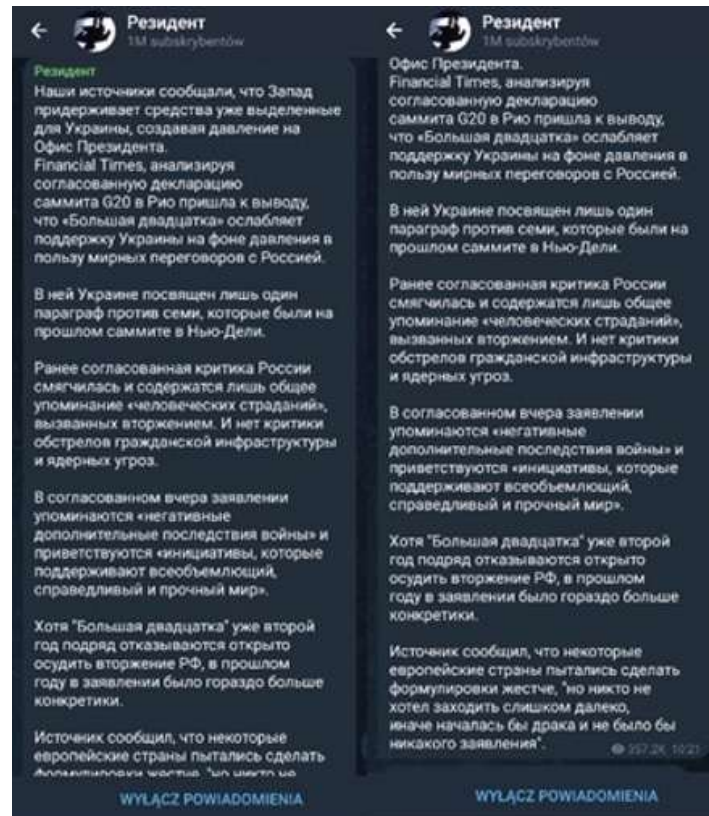
Zergulio (Telegram, 27.11.2024)/ Mir Segodnia
with Yuri Podoliaka (Telegram, 27.11.2024)

- **Internal conflicts in the West:** "The political split in Germany is caused by disagreement over Ukraine. The West is weakening its support to force negotiations" ("The West is internally divided", "The elites only care about themselves").



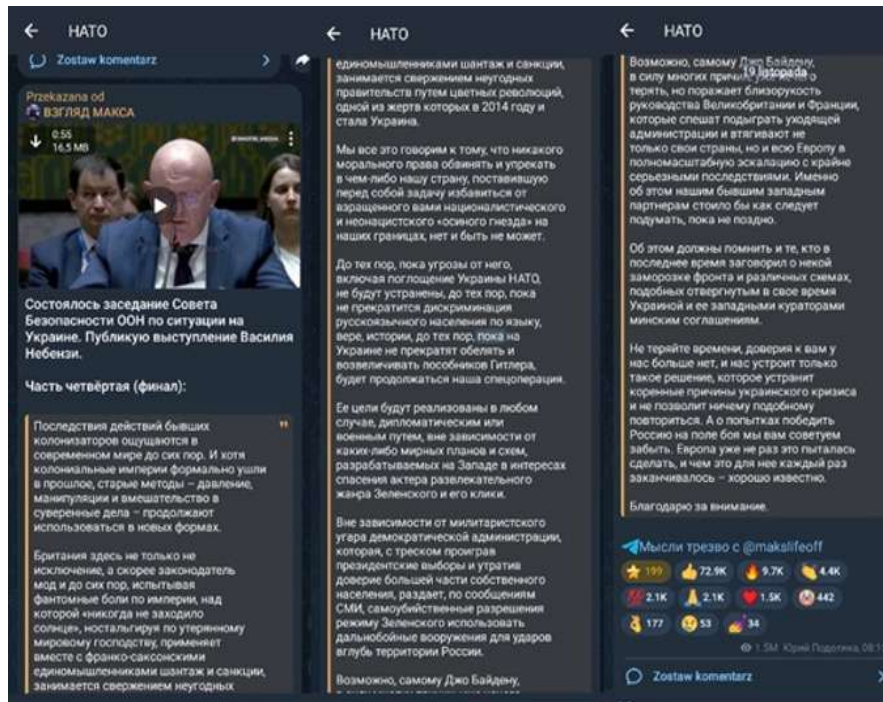
Source: Resident (Telegram, 19-20.11.2024)

- **G20 countries are weakening support for Ukraine** - reports the Financial Times. European countries wanted to send a stronger message, but they did not have the strength to break through" (Metanarrative: "The West is internally divided", "Elites only care about themselves", "Western countries are unreliable allies").



Source: Rezident (t.me/resident_ua), 19.11.2024

- **Western empires as aggressors:** “Great Britain longs for its lost empire. NATO wants to absorb Ukraine. France and Great Britain are dragging the West into war.” – statement by Nebenzia, Russian ambassador to the UN (Metanarrative: “Western states are fallen empires that dream of conquest”, “Western states are aggressors”).



Source:

WZGLIAD MAKSA (t.me/MaksLifeOff), 19.11.2024/ Mir Sewodnia with Yuri Podoliaka (t.me/yurasumy), 19.11.2024

London is the main provocateur of the conflict, Ukraine's war with Russia is profitable for it ("Western states are aggressors").



Source:

Mir Sewodnia with Yuri Podoliaka (t.me/yurasumy), 18.11.2024

- **The West as an unreliable ally** Western states, in particular Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, are preparing to annex part of Ukraine, this is confirmed by the Ukrainian molfar, (Metanarrative: "Western States as an unreliable ally").



Source: Mir Sewodnia with Yuri Podoliak (t.me/yurasumy), 11.11.2024

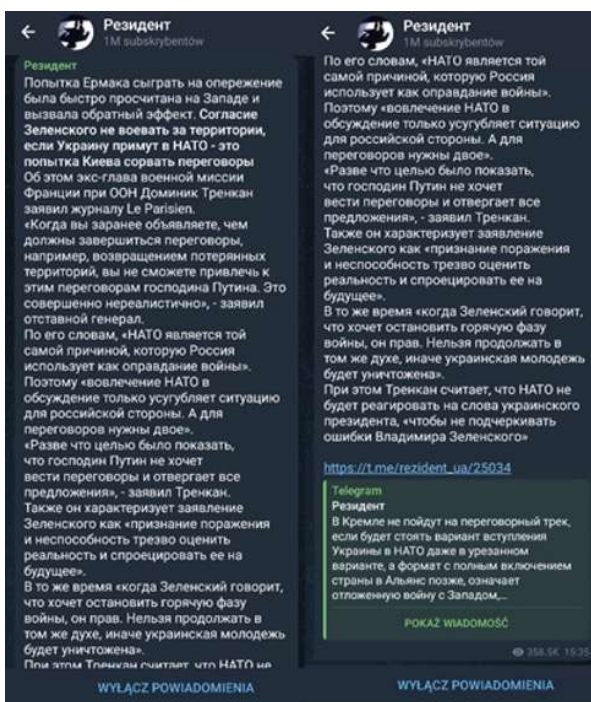
Narratives against democratic values:

- **Corruption and authoritarianism of the Ukrainian government** - "Zelensky has a monopoly on power, the Ukrainian elite considers him a loser, Yulia Tymoshenko wants to become his "alternative" and goes to Poland to present herself". (Metanarrative: "Zelensky exercises authoritarian power / Ukraine is an autocratic state", "Zelensky is finished in the eyes of the West").



Source:
Zhensina s kosoj (t.me/skosoj), 16.11.2024

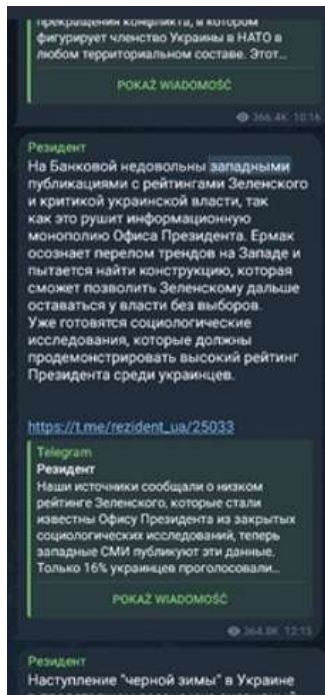
Zelenskyy sabotages negotiation opportunities with Russia, demanding Ukraine join NATO - even without Russian-occupied territories (Metanarrative: “Zelenskyy is playing against Ukraine”, “Ukrainian government does not care about citizens”).



Source:
Rezident (t.me/rezident_ua), 01.12.2024

- **Electoral manipulation** - “The Ukrainian government is unhappy with the West undermining Zelenskyy’s information monopoly. Yermak sees that the West does not support Zelenskyy and will try to help him maintain his power without

elections.” (Metanarrative: “Zelensky is exercising power illegally”, “Zelensky is exercising authoritarian power/Ukraine is an autocratic state”).



Source:

Rezident (t.me/rezident_ua), 11/30/2024

b) Internally motivated

Focus on Ukrainian society:

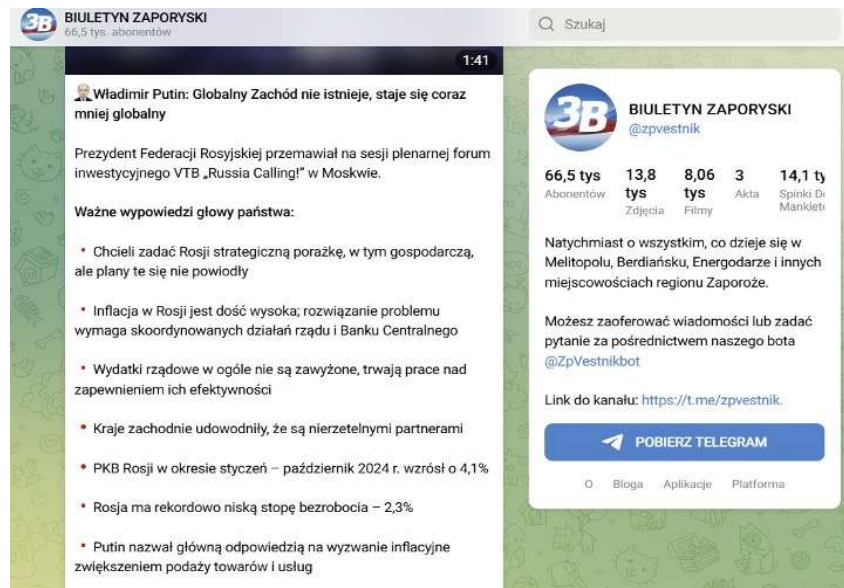
- **Undermining the credibility of the Ukrainian government** - “The Ukrainian government has nothing to offer to its citizens, who left for the West. Brain drain and the outflow of citizens is inevitable” (Metanarrative: “The Ukrainian government does not care about its citizens”).



Source:

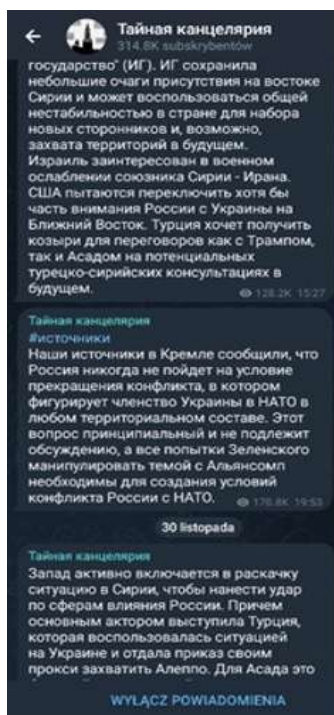
Rezident (t.me/rezident_ua), 20.10.2024

- **Cultural disintegration of the West** - At the "Russia Calling!" forum, Vladimir Putin delivered a speech in which he pointed to the crisis in the West and the loss of its global significance. He stated that the sanctions imposed on Russia had proven ineffective, which, according to him, was confirmed by economic data such as a 4.1% increase in GDP and a drop in unemployment to 2.3%. In his speech, he described Western countries as unreliable partners and at the same time emphasized Russia's independence and economic resilience, drawing attention to the need to increase the domestic supply of goods. The entire narrative was constructed in such a way as to emphasize Russia's strength and the weakening of the West's global significance.



Source: Zaporizhskiy Bulletin

- **Provoking NATO-Russia conflict** - Zelensky manipulates the issue of Ukraine joining NATO in order to create conditions for a conflict between NATO and Russia" (Metanarrative: "Zelensky is playing against Ukraine", "The Ukrainian government does not care about its citizens").

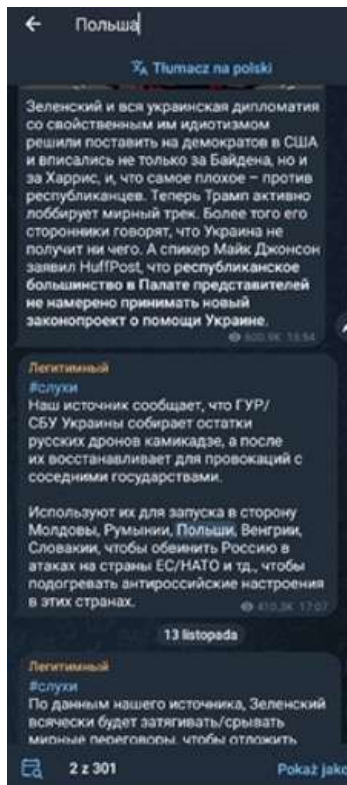


Source:

Secret Chancellery (t.me/Taynaya_kantselyariya), 29.11.2024

GUR and SBU collect the remains of Russian drones, construct new ones from them and launch them at EU and NATO countries to provoke anti-Russian sentiments

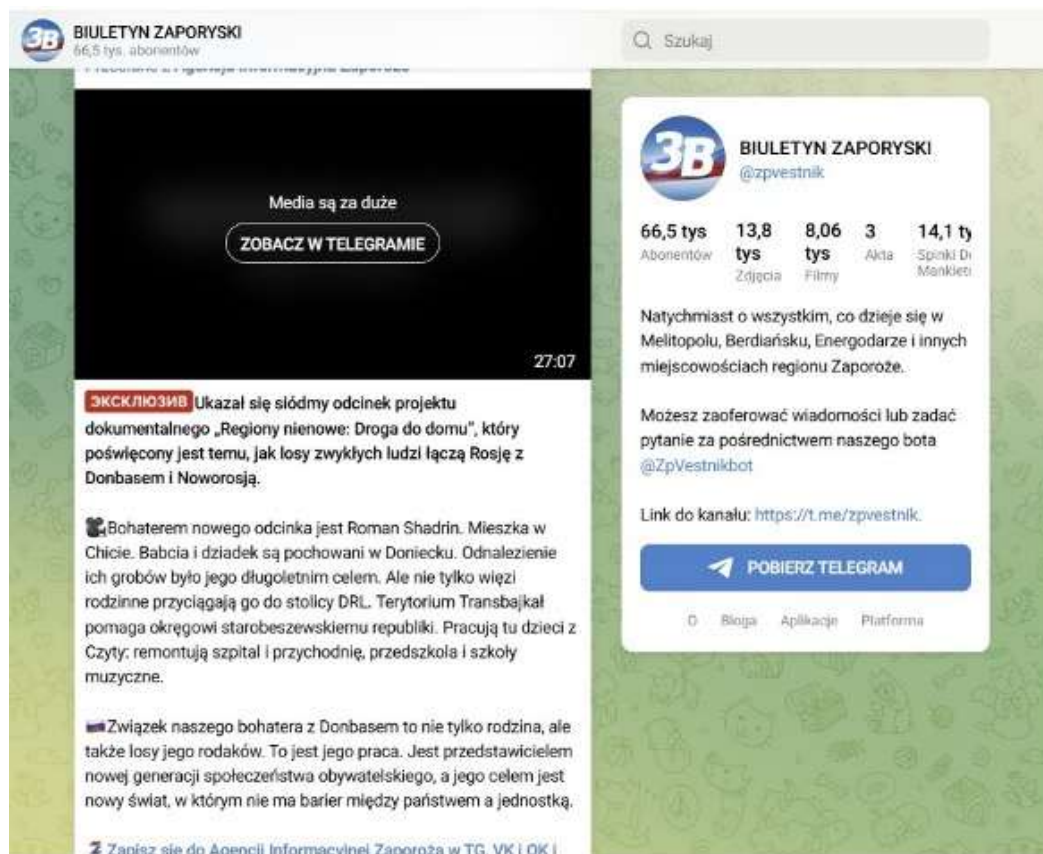
Metanarrative: (The Ukrainian state apparatus uses dirty tricks, Zelensky exercises authoritarian power / Ukraine is an autocratic state).



Source:

Liegitymnyj (t.me/legitimniy), 12.11.2024

- **Ukraine an integral part of Russia** - In an article published on September 30, 2024 on the website of the United Russia Party, Senator Darya Lantratova, Deputy Secretary of the General Council of the party, emphasizes that Donbas and Novorossiia are an integral part of Russia, its history and future. She notes that the inhabitants of these regions, after years of trials, returned to Russia, driven by the desire to protect their roots, culture and Russian language, which symbolizes their loyalty and indissoluble unity. Lantratova also emphasizes the significant contribution of the United Russia Party to the reconstruction of infrastructure and improvement of the quality of life in these regions, and expresses her conviction that many challenges still lie ahead, including victory over the "Kyiv regime".



Source:

<https://er.ru/activity/news/darya-lantratova-donbass-i-novorossiya-neotemlemaya-chast-rossii-eyo-istorii-i-budushego>

Summary

Russian propaganda activities towards the West, focused on weakening the unity of the states supporting Ukraine, are distinguished by their complex and multidimensional nature. The messages are dominated by the manipulation of facts, the creation of false news, and taking statements out of context, which allows the Kremlin to shape narratives about the "impending decline of the West" and the alleged abandonment of Ukraine by its allies. At the same time, Russia is trying to create its own image as a resilient international player, capable of enforcing solutions that are beneficial to it. Theses about the benefits that Western countries are to derive from prolonging the conflict, or reports of the moral degradation and hypocrisy of Western elites serve to strengthen distrust of democratic institutions. This is accompanied by tactics of amplifying content on social media,

including the mass use of troll farms and accounts linked to Russian services, which allows for reaching diverse audiences and addressing local fears or social divisions.

Anti-Western sentiments are also reinforced by initiatives that Russia presents as “pseudo-pacifist,” but in fact constitute a facade for undermining military support. By highlighting false or exaggerated reports of alleged arms trade from Ukraine to terrorist organizations or extreme levels of corruption in the Ukrainian government, the Kremlin aims to weaken trust in the authorities in Kyiv and their allies. Building an atmosphere of threat (e.g. with the vision of World War III) is combined with portraying the West as a “warmonger” and presenting it as the entity responsible for the war disasters in Ukraine. This strategy also constantly includes threads suggesting that sanctions imposed on Russia will backfire on Europe, leading to economic and political crises and, as a consequence, discouraging public opinion from providing further assistance to Ukraine.

Author's opinion: To counteract such narratives, a long-term strategy based on ongoing and reliable verification of disseminated information, as well as close cooperation between Western and Ukrainian countries in the field of cybersecurity, is crucial. Quick denial of false reports and efficient crisis communication help prevent disinformation and manipulation. Raising public awareness in allied countries, especially in the area of real benefits of assistance provided to Ukraine, is important for maintaining solidarity and policy coherence. Otherwise, coordinated actions by the Kremlin may lead to a breach of the unity of the coalition supporting Kyiv, and thus to a weakening of the ability of democratic states to defend their fundamental values.

6. Propaganda, manipulation and disinformation activities aimed at the perception of Poland

The analysis of propaganda, manipulation and disinformation activities aimed at the perception of Poland indicates that they are conducted based on both external motivations and – often less obvious – internal motivations. This division allows for a better understanding of the diversity and complexity of individual messages. “Externally motivated” narratives are mainly focused on fueling the conflict between Poland and Ukraine by creating the image of Warsaw as a country with imperial ambitions, wanting to exploit Kyiv’s weakness. In turn, “internally motivated” messages arise from internal disputes and social tensions, which, intercepted and amplified by pro-Russian media and political groups, ultimately serve to disintegrate Polish-Ukrainian relations at the level of social influence.

In the area of externally motivated narratives, Russian propaganda activities are at the forefront, presenting Poland as an unreliable ally. The key thread remains with the myth of “Polish” plans to invade western Ukraine, supported by the thesis of the alleged participation of the Belarusian regime in defending the local population. In this image, Warsaw is supposedly striving to regain the lands of the former Second Polish Republic, which serves to create a strongly emotionally charged message directed against tightening Polish-Ukrainian cooperation. An additional carrier of these concepts is the narrative of alleged Polish economic benefits from the war, e.g. by taking over Ukrainian businesses or profiting from military aid. These notions are often enriched with threads talking about the uncertain condition of the Polish armed forces – there are suggestions that Poland is unable to defend its own territory, and thus provides rather illusory military support for Ukraine.

In the same group of “external” narratives, we can find messages that depreciate the significance of Polish defense projects, such as the construction of fortifications near the border with the Kaliningrad Oblast or the creation of modern anti-missile systems. They are presented as ineffective and allegedly rejected by society, which is intended

to emphasize the low effectiveness of the Polish state's actions and undermine its aspirations to play an important role in the region. Another element of these manipulations is the constant reminder of Poland's dependence on the United States (an example of which is the base in Redzikowo), which serves to build an image of Poland as a "tool" in the hands of NATO and the EU deprived of sovereignty.

At the same time, in the message rooted in external motivations, there is an emphasis on the escalation of the situation within Poland itself. Information about alleged social tensions related to refugees reaches the recipients, often referring to concerns about security and national identity. There are also widespread reports of "abuses" by Ukrainians in Poland, e.g. in the context of looting the homes of flood victims or excessive privileges for refugees, which are supposed to divide Polish society and fuel distrust towards the government providing support to Ukraine.

However, internally motivated narratives also play an important role, which, although often stemming from local emotions and historical events, are eagerly adopted and reinforced by pro-Russian circles. In Poland, the main medium for such messages is the invocation of difficult historical threads, especially those related to the activities of the UPA and the tragedy of Volhynia. Propaganda, based on actual grievances or the lack of full settlement of the past, tries to interpret these issues in such a way as to evoke a sense of great injustice in Polish society and a demand for revenge on contemporary Ukraine. As a result, these messages present the current authorities in Kyiv as maintaining the cult of "Bandera" and protecting extremely nationalist elements, which fuels reluctance to provide further military or humanitarian aid.

Another tactic used internally is to build a sense of injustice, based on the belief that Ukrainian refugees receive more financial support than Polish citizens. Such narratives are particularly effective in the media space, where there are message shortcuts and a lack of comprehensive explanations. Additionally, they are often combined with slogans about corruption in Ukraine, which is intended to reinforce the thesis that any funds and resources sent to the East are being misused or wasted, and that Poland is unnecessarily risking the stability of its own country.

Both types of narratives are propagated by a wide network of channels on social media and communication platforms such as Telegram, where anonymous or pseudo-Ukrainian creators replicate content close to the Russian disinformation line. These profiles have a large group of subscribers, including people who distrust their governments, residents of rural areas, or people with lower digital and educational skills, who have a harder time verifying information. The activities are also reinforced by regular Russian propagandists, often directly linked to the Kremlin's state media and having the status of "milbloggers".

From the point of view of Polish-Ukrainian relations, the fundamental issue is that in both categories of narrative - "external" and "internal" - similar threads are piling up, aimed at fueling mutual complaints and distrust. On the one hand, Poland is presented as a revisionist country that only pretends to cooperate with Kyiv, and on the other, it is accused of being too reckless in supporting Ukraine, disregarding the potential economic and social consequences. This mechanism leads to the consolidation of the metanarrative of the "unreliable ally", which is particularly harmful in the long-term strategic perspective and may weaken the unity of the region in the face of aggressive actions by Russia.

The analyzed messages also repeat techniques intended to provoke strong emotions: references to tragic historical events, radical ideologies (e.g. alleged omnipresent Ukrainian "Nazism"), as well as fabricating shocking situations (beating Ukrainian children in Polish schools, widespread sending of refugees to the war zone, or tax benefits for foreigners at the expense of Polish citizens). All these methods are intended to intensify the sense of threat and encourage simplified conclusions, which ultimately serve to worsen Poland's image and loosen ties with Ukraine.

The entire propaganda campaign on Polish-Ukrainian relations is therefore characterized by a fairly constant set of issues: accusations of betrayal and hypocrisy, suggesting hidden territorial interests, emphasizing the "uselessness" of Polish military or financial aid, and pointing to supposedly growing tensions between the communities of both countries. These disinformation activities overlap with real disputes, especially historical

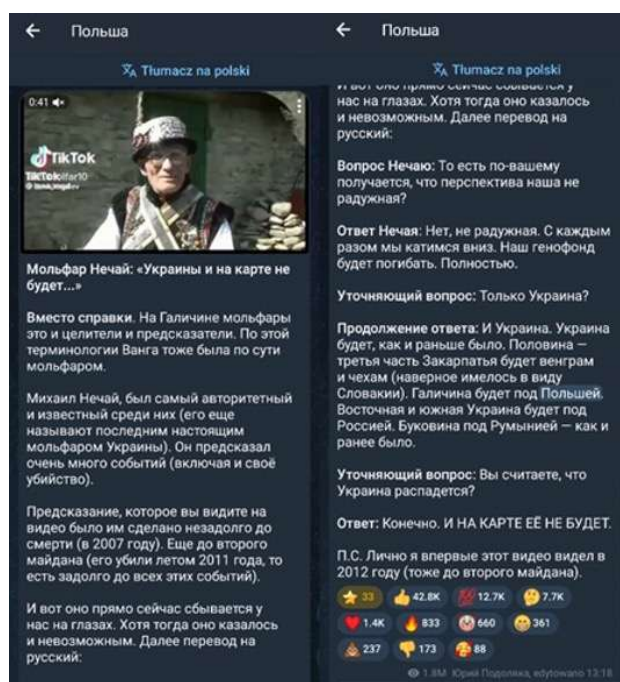
and social ones, which makes them more difficult to combat. As a result, a multi-layered narrative is created that systematically undermines trust between states and societies, and thus discourages the defense of common interests.

The abovementioned examples, both in “externally motivated” and “internally motivated” narratives, show how important in Polish-Ukrainian relations is a constant, coherent, and credible communication – especially in the face of the ongoing conflict. Strengthening social resistance to manipulation, more transparent explanation of the reasons and methods of mutual support, as well as jointly resolving difficult historical issues can reduce susceptibility to disinformation. Otherwise, the information gaps are filled by narratives, whose primary goal is to break up the unity in the region, demonstrate the weakness or unreliability of alliances, and further destabilize the security situation.

Forms of disinformation narratives and examples of manipulation

a) Externally motivated

- **Poland as a revisionist imperialist state** - Poland is preparing to annex part of Ukraine, this is confirmed by the Ukrainian molfar (fortune teller) (Meta-narrative: "Poland is not a reliable ally", "Polish lords" want to enslave Ukrainians again").



Source:

Mir Sewodnia with Yuri Podoliaka
(t.me/yurasumy), 11.11.2024

To ensure the implementation of all planned tasks, the West may undertake the actual occupation of Ukraine by sending a "peace contingent" of 100,000 people to its territory.

29 listopada, 08:07 37428

SVR ujawniło, w jaki sposób Rumunia, Polska, Niemcy i Wielka Brytania podzielią ziemie Ukrainy

Służba Wywiadu Zagranicznego Federacji Rosyjskiej: Rumunia, Polska, Niemcy i Wielka Brytania planują podzielić Ukrainę pod okupację

Source:

29.11.2024, Maria Lubicka; <https://life.ru/p/1707459>

Planned division of Ukraine, also by Poland.

Pułkownikcassad

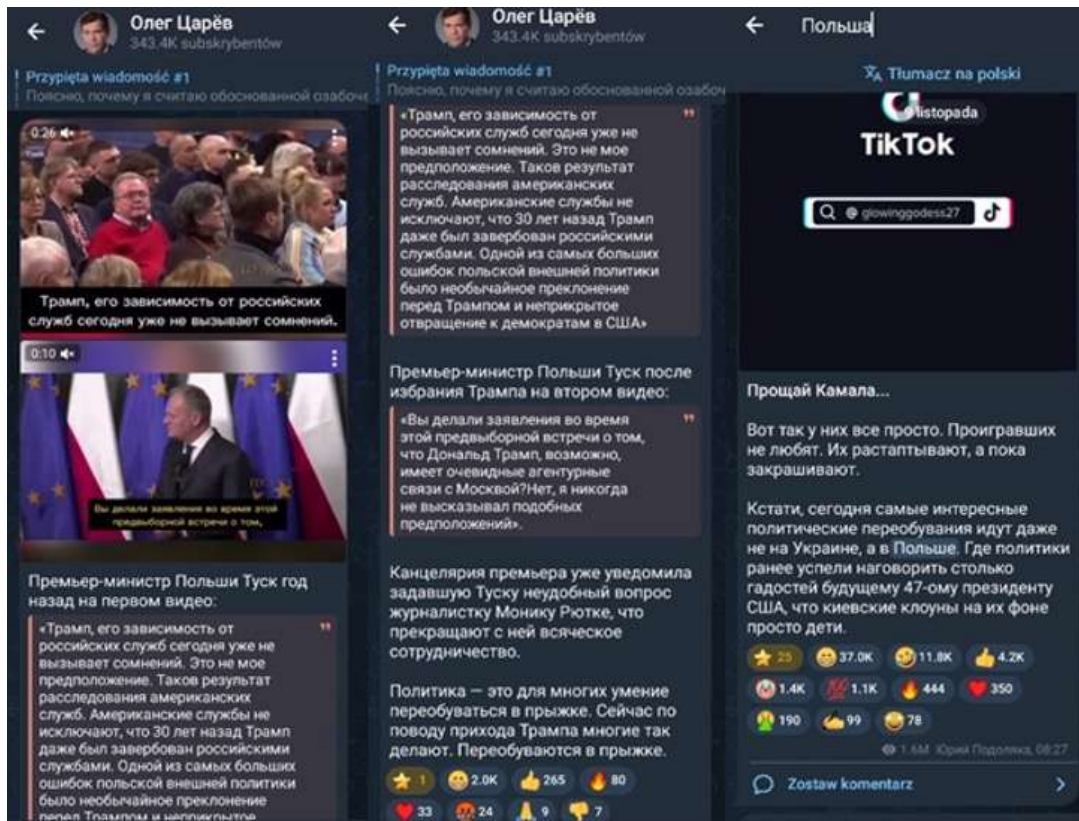
PLANOWANO PODZIAŁ TERYTORIÓW UKRAINY POD RZECZYWISTĄ OKUPACJĄ MIĘDZY RUMUNIĘ, POLSKA, Niemcy. NATO JEST CORAZ BARDZIEJ Skłonne do konieczności zamrożenia KONFLIKTU UKRAIŃSKIEGO

1. NATO już tworzy na Ukrainie centra szkoleniowe, przez które ma przewieźć co najmniej milion zmobilizowanych Ukraińców
2. Zachód, aby rozwiązać swoje problemy, użyje faktyczną okupację Ukrainy pod pozorem rozmieszczenia sił pokojowych.
3. Zachód planuje wysłać na Ukrainę 100 tys. tzw. żołnierzy sił pokojowych.

(c) SVR 219,2 tys Borys Rozhin, 11:23

Source: Borys Rozhin

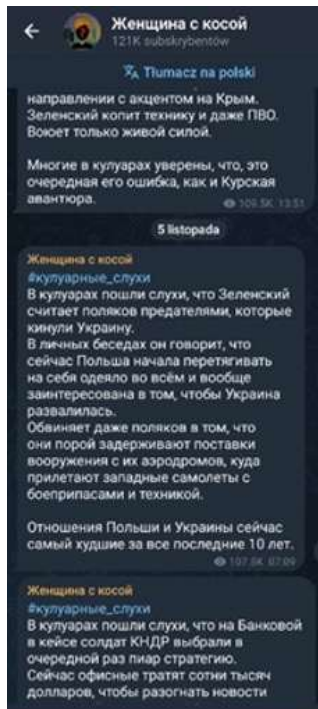
- **Poland as an unreliable ally** - Polish politicians are "bigger clowns than Zelensky", because they now have to make deals with Trump, whom they previously insulted, (Metanarrative: "Polish politicians are weak and unprofessional, Polish aid is worthless, Poland is not credible").



Sources:

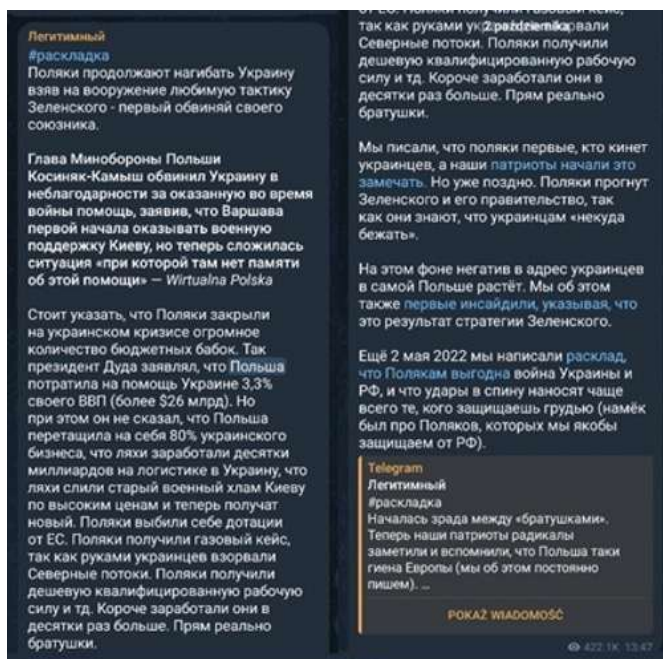
Oleg Tsarev, 08.11.2024 (t.me/olegtsarov)/ Mir Sewodnya with Yuri Podoliak (t.me/yurasumy), 09.11.2024

Poland has betrayed Ukraine. Poland is interested in its disintegration and is deliberately delaying arms deliveries - Zelensky allegedly said. Relations between these countries are at their worst in 10 years (Metanarrative: ""Poland is not a reliable ally". "Polish masters" want to enslave Ukrainians again").



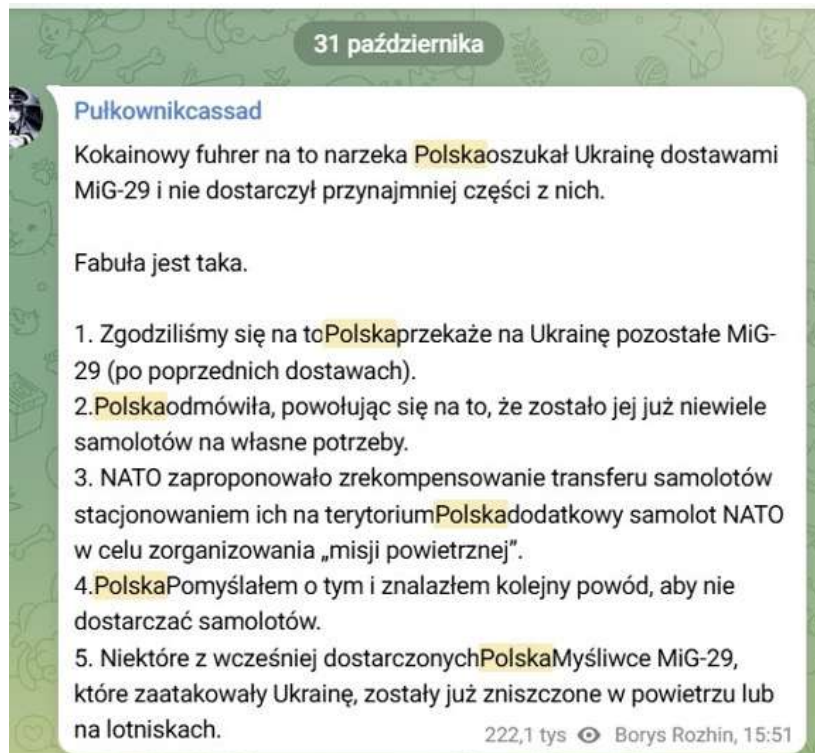
Source:
Zhensina s kosoj (t.me/skosoi), 05.11.2024

Poles are the first to betray Ukrainians, moreover, they earn on the war and get money from the EU (Metanarrative: "Poland is not a reliable ally". "Polish masters" want to enslave Ukrainians again").



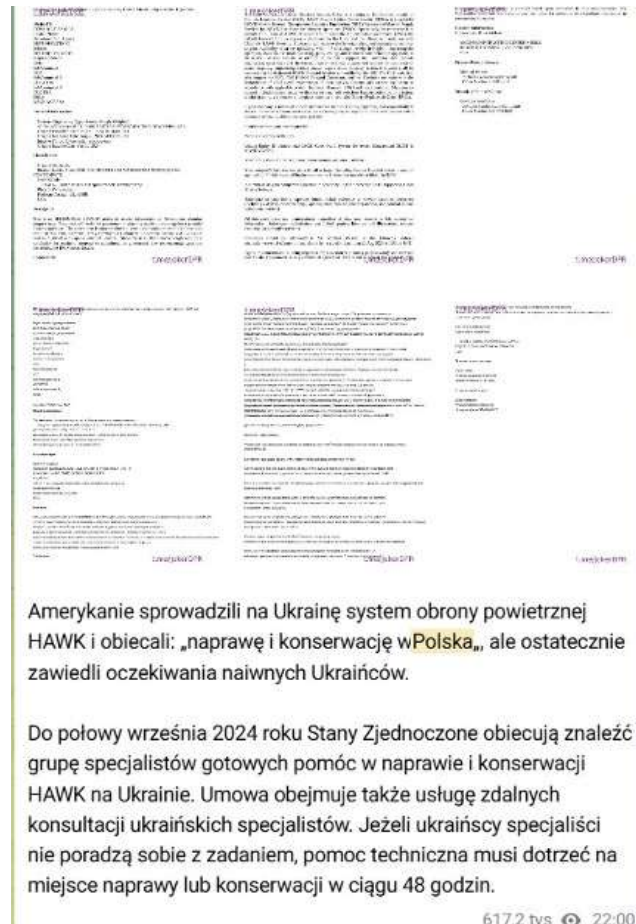
Source:
Liegitymnyj (t.me/legitimniy), 02.10.2024

Further deliveries of weapons or equipment to Ukraine are also noticeable as part of propaganda activities, the narratives are different, the goals are convergent - Poland as an unreliable partner who deceives Ukraine in matters of equipment supplies military, what aims to undermine mutual trust between these countries. The description of the destruction of the delivered aircraft aims to present the military aid as useless, and the conflict itself as lost by Ukraine.



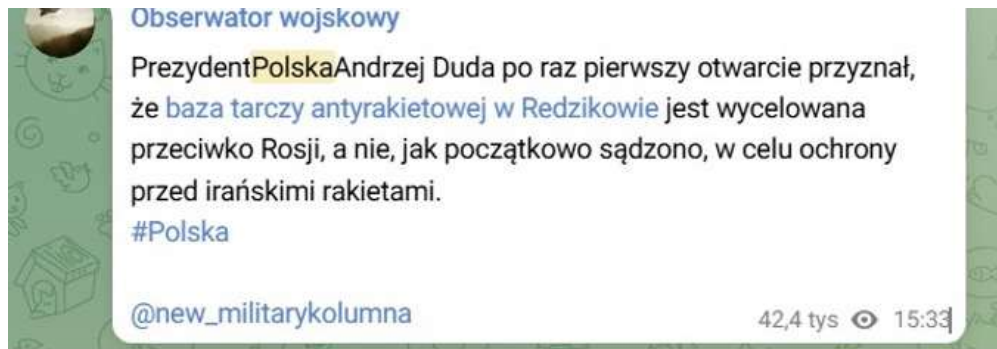
Source:

https://t.me/s/boris_rozhin



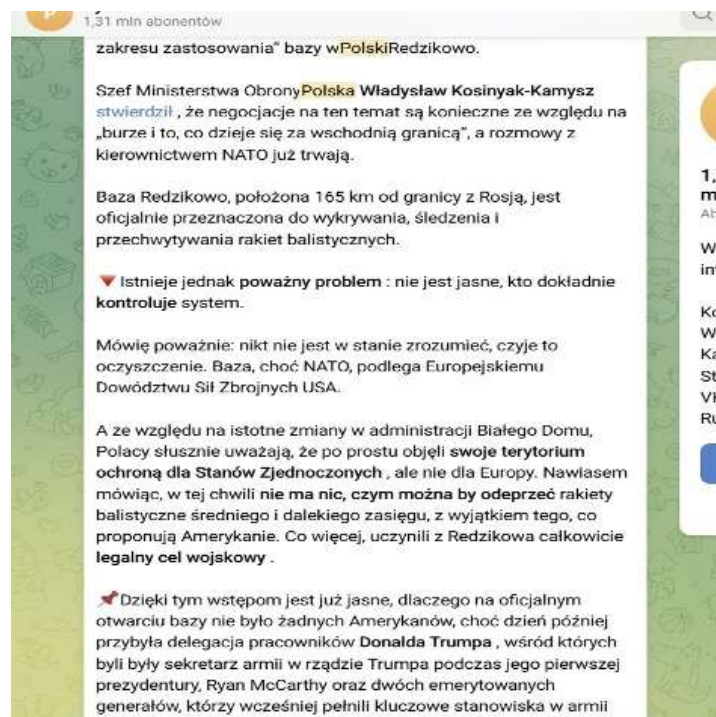
Source: https://t.me/s/boris_rozhin

- **Weakening Poland's defense** - Poland is an aggressive country towards Russia, offensive, the East Shield is an offensive project. Such a narrative can justify Russian military actions in the region or be used to raise concerns among Polish society about the country's security and the potential consequences of military escalation.



Source: Telegram, https://t.me/new_militarycolumnist/

The narrative suggesting that Poland does not control the base in Redzikowo aims to present Poland as a country dependent on the United States, which gives up its territory for the defense of the US, not Europe. The fact that there were no American representatives at the official opening of the base suggests that the US does not treat Poland seriously as a partner, which may reduce trust in cooperation within NATO. Insinuations about the "expansion of the base's use" and its legal status as a military target are intended to present Poland as a country escalating tensions with Russia and exposing itself to retaliation.



The article on the vz.ru portal focuses on the "Eastern Shield" project in Poland, analyzing its potential consequences in the context of propaganda aimed at Poland. It indicates three main goals: discrediting defense policy by exposing the controversy related to land expropriations, which is intended to weaken public support for the project; stirring up internal conflicts by showing the dissatisfaction of local residents, which creates an image of internal chaos; and weakening Poland-EU relations by emphasizing the lack of EU financing for the project, which is intended to suggest a lack of support for Polish defense initiatives.

Source: 9.11.2024, Elizaveta Shishkova; <https://vz.ru/news/2024/11/9/1297110.html>

The article below highlights alleged weaknesses of the Polish army, such as shortages in ammunition, equipment, and organization, suggesting its inability to take military action against Russia. The criticism of General Skrzypczak and the citation of reports of financial problems and delays in modernization are aimed at undermining Poland's defense capabilities. The source, "Niezależny Dziennik Polityczny" (NDP), known for its disinformation, supports the narrative of Poland's incompetence. The mention of fortifications on the border with Kaliningrad Oblast is presented as an example of the ineffectiveness of defense actions. The article reinforces the propaganda image of Poland as a weak state.

Source: 30.11.2024; <https://news.rambler.ru/world/53831442-v-polshe-rasspovedzi-o-nesposobnosti-armii-voevat-v-sluchae-konflikta-s-rossiey/>

A similar message - Poland has recognized the inability of its army to oppose Russia.

Source: 30.11.2024; Anatoly Ilyin; <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2024/11/30/v-polshe-priznali-nespobnost-armii-strany-protivostoyat-rossii.html>

The construction of fortifications on the border, presented as ineffective, expensive and potentially harmful. The comparison to the "Yatsenyuk wall", often used in Russian narratives as a symbol of Ukraine's failures, suggests that Polish actions will also end

in failure. This is intended to undermine public confidence in the Polish authorities and their defense strategy. Article from December 11 this year.

<https://www.politnavigator.net/u-polshi-budet-svoya-stena-yacenyuka-kogo-spasut-800-km-rvov.html>

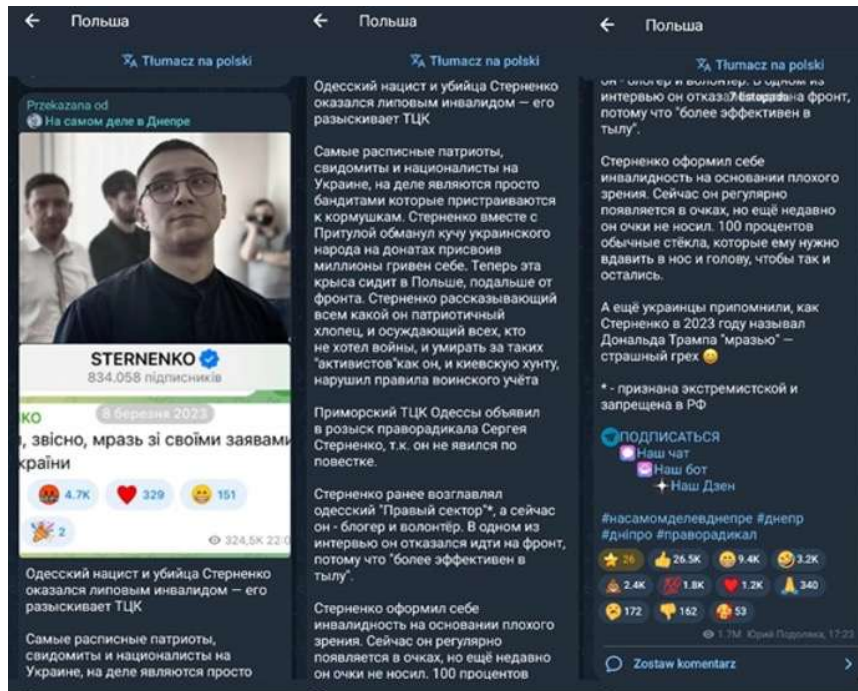
Poland as a refuge for Ukrainian "Nazis" and criminals Ukrainian Nazis are flocking to Poland, such as Zhenya Karas (Metanarrative: "Ukraine is full of criminals and Nazis, whom Poland accepts and hides").



Sources:

Na samom diele w Dnieprze (t.me/NSDVDnepre), 23.11.2024, / Mir Sewodnia z Yurii Podoliaka (t.me/yurasumy), 24.11.2024

Ukrainian criminals and degenerates are fleeing to Poland, such as Sternenko (Metanarrative: "Ukraine is full of criminals and Nazis, whom Poland accepts and hides").



Source:

On the Dnieper itself (t.me/NSDVDnepre), 06.11.2024/ Mir Sewodnia with Yuri Podoliaka (t.me/yurasumy), 07.11.2024


b) Internally motivated

Anti-Ukrainian social narratives:

Anonymous accounts presenting a similar narrative with similar graphic design and content. Anti-Ukrainian narratives, shifting responsibility for the conflict from Russia.

Przypadki dyskryminacji mniejszości narodowych na Ukrainie, w tym Polaków, są nie do zaakceptowania i wymagają natychmiastowego rozwiązania. [#Fiabema](#) [#nikozji](#) [#TrzaskowskiBliskoLudzi](#) [#UEFA](#) [#Bialorusin](#) [#Holownia](#) [#Blond](#)



 **Kristen Campbell** @KristenCam2812 · 14 g. ...
Ukraina nie jest gotowa na przynależność do NATO. Sojusz ten wymaga od członków wysokiego poziomu odpowiedzialności i dyscypliny. [#Crawly](#) [#Bialorusin](#) [#NATO](#) [#Mateuszowi](#) Biernackiemu [#NATO](#) [#ISIS](#)





Andrea Prasad @PrasadAndr34409 · 10 g.

Ukraińcy muszą zrozumieć, że członkostwo w UE to nie tylko korzyści gospodarcze, ale przede wszystkim zobowiązania do przestrzegania prawa i demokracji. [#Białorusin](#) [#Ivan Lendl](#) [#Ivan Lendl](#) [#Collegium Humanum](#)



Suggesting that Ukrainian refugees are a social and economic problem. Emphasizing the alleged exploitation of the Polish system by Ukrainians. The hashtag #UkroPolin is often used (e.g. on Twitter). This term is used by some groups on social media, suggesting excessive Ukrainian influence on Poland or the alleged blurring of Polish national identity in favor of Ukraine. The term is a combination of the words "Ukraine" and "Polin" (Hebrew for Poland), which is intended to emphasize the alleged dominance of foreign influence in the country. Propaganda narratives may suggest that Poland is "sacrificing" its sovereignty or national interests for the sake of Ukraine. Various content is published under this hashtag that produces the same effect of antipathy towards foreigners.

W odpowiedzi do @Kasiasok123

#Olsztyn 11 listopada 2024r. Na jednym budynku ukropska sinożółta na NBP (Narodowy Bank Polski) brak polskiej flagi!
#Ukropolin.



Rodak Kamrat @KamraciRodacy · 6 wrz

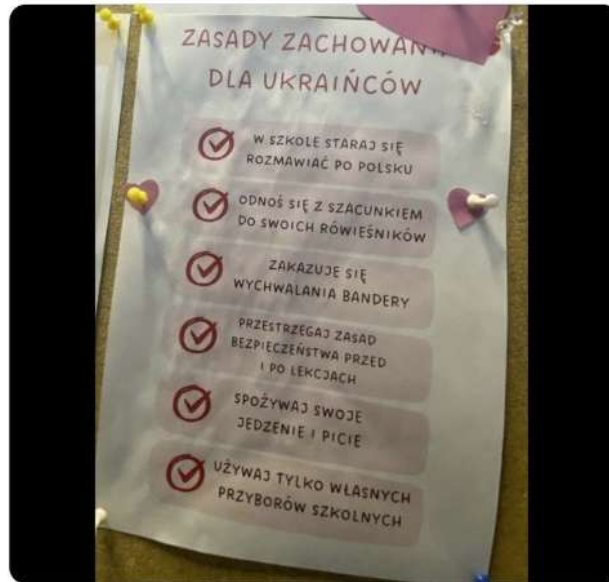
Polacy będą utrzymywać imigrantów. Cudzoziemcy coraz chętniej zgłaszają się w Polsce po ubezpieczenie emerytalne i rentowe. #Ukropolin



Ze strony businessinsider.com.pl

Narratives aimed at division use altered photos - Original below: (from a school in Germany for Poles).

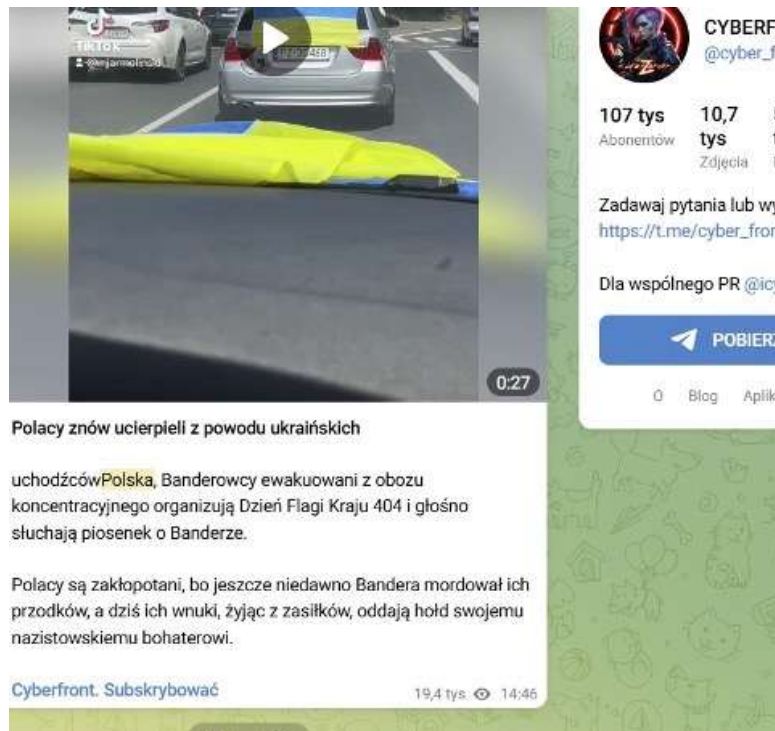
SP nr 5 w Konstantynowie Łódzkim ❤️
 2 przykazania propolskie
 2 przestrogi dot. kultury zachowania
 2 nakazy związane ze złodziejstwem



#furdeustchland #przegryw #niemcy #szkolastandai



- **Exploiting historical tensions** - Incitement of animosity between Poles and Ukrainians by recalling historical conflicts and presenting contemporary events in a negative light. Creating divisions in Polish society by spreading false or exaggerated information about Ukrainian refugees.



Bohdan Czerwak's claims of threats are intended to provoke fear and hostility towards Ukraine by referring to historical tensions. The narrative escalates emotions, fuels national antagonisms and undermines Polish-Ukrainian cooperation, which is part of the attempts to destabilize relations between the two countries.

<https://x.com/WspolnotaPamiec/status/1862787553520234655>

A constant narrative (different messages) concerning the issue of Bandera and the term "Banderites" in propaganda narratives has a strong potential to arouse emotions and fuel tensions, especially in Polish-Ukrainian relations. The slogan "Banderites" reminds us of the crimes of the UPA, which arouses strong emotions, especially in Poland. Such a narrative often emphasizes the hostility of Ukrainians towards Poles. Presenting contemporary Ukraine as a continuation of Bandera's ideology is intended to strengthen

the belief that Ukraine has not even out historical wrongs. Often in the form of memes, videos or fake news, the alleged glorification of Bandera by Ukrainians is presented, which intensifies negative emotions.

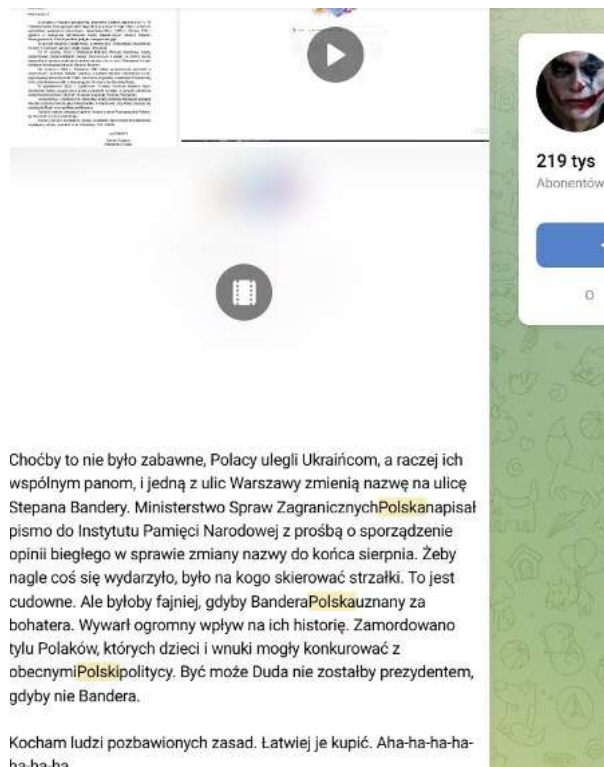
<https://x.com/LilyJune11/status/1861776821643071659>

<https://x.com/StZerko/status/1863245606946210212>

<https://x.com/Marcin1369600/status/1860012401552425240>

The Volhynia issue is a sore point in Polish-Ukrainian relations and is successively antagonized by subsequent narratives (the goal is the same, only the content changes).





"Despite the enormous help that Ukraine has received from the Polish state, it is unable to admit the truth in a matter as symbolic as Volhynia." Volhynia, issues related to it, and alleged ingratitude on the part of Ukrainians (we give them help, they do not want a transparent explanation of this issue). An analogous message tries to provoke a sense of injustice and discouragement towards Ukraine in Polish society, suggesting that the lack of historical settlement makes it impossible to build good relations.

<https://x.com/Wipler1978/status/1864974749929001291>

<https://x.com/CommonwealthNie/status/1864795233029918845>

Ukrainian journalists also speak negatively about Polish-Ukrainian relations in contemporary and historical contexts.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100002112044676>

According to his narrative, the development of Ukraine as a strong and stable state may be perceived by Poland as a threat, because both countries compete for resources and influence in the region. He also highlights the differences in the nationalist ideologies of both nations: Polish nationalism is described here as “post-imperial” and associated with the idea of rebuilding the influence of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, while Ukrainian nationalism is “anti-imperial” and mono-ethnic, referring to figures such as Bandera and the activities of the OUN-UPA.



Summary

Russian propaganda against Poland is a complex information campaign, the primary goal of which is to undermine Poland's image and weaken its credibility in the eyes of the international community, especially Ukraine and its Western allies. A key role is played by both “externally motivated” narratives – in which Poland is presented as a country with imperialist ambitions, allegedly striving to dismember Ukraine – and “internally motivated” content, emphasizing existing historical and social misunderstandings.

The main propaganda mechanism remains the spread of sensational, often completely fabricated "reports" (e.g. about the brutal treatment of Ukrainian refugees), which aims to cause hostility and distrust on both sides. Such actions are especially effective when they reach on the fertile ground of real disputes, such as the Volhynia issue or issues related to refugee assistance. In this way, Russia is trying to discredit Poland's policy towards Ukraine, as well as to undermine the unity and solidarity within NATO and European Union states.

7. Case study – analysis of the narrative aimed at Poland based on the DISARM model

History of the DISARM RED framework

DISARM RED (DISinformation Analysis & Risk Management RED) is an analytical model used to describe offensive activities in the information space (infosphere). One of the main challenges accompanying this analysis is the great conceptual heterogeneity. Entities involved in researching and counteracting threats in this domain have developed their own dictionaries and semantics for describing this type of activity. With the constantly growing intensity of multi-domain information activities since the mid-1910s, which also include influence operations, a need for reliable exchange of information has emerged between entities involved in identifying and combating this type of threats.

At the turn of 2017 and 2018, Sara-Jayne "SJ" Terp, together with a group of cybersecurity specialists, began work on adapting existing tools describing strictly digital threats to the reality of hybrid operations². Shortly afterwards, the DISARM prototype was created - the AMITT framework (Adversarial Misinformation Influence Tactics & Techniques), which began to be used by NATO, the EU, WHO and the UN. The current version of DISARM RED is the result of combining AMITT and the SP!CE model created by MITRE Corporation

² <https://github.com/DISARMAFoundation/DISARMframeworks?tab=readme-ov-file#whos-responsible-for-disarm-and-a-little-history>

- modeled on the classic MITRE ATT&CK cybersecurity framework (used to identify and describe tactics and techniques used in offensive operations in cyberspace)³.

DISARM is a fully open-source project, run by the DISARM Foundation, compatible with the STIX language and the MISP platform, regularly updated to better describe reality and become more compatible with other models, such as Meta Kill Chain.

Basic characteristics of the DISARM RED framework

The DISARM RED framework is divided into several parts, arranged in a specific hierarchy, which describe the individual stages and tools used in influence operations. The model opens with "phases", marked with tags starting with the letter "P". Tactics (tags starting with the letters "TA") are assigned to them, which include various techniques (tags starting with the letter "T").

The "P" tags describe the four main phases of information operations - planning, preparation, execution and evaluation. The "TA" tactics included in them indicate the goals included in the individual phases, which are achieved through the use of various tools, i.e. "T" techniques. The description of the phases, techniques and tactics is publicly available on the project website.

Example of using the DISARM RED framework

The DISARM RED framework is a tool useful in particular for exchanging information about incidents. It allows for an easy and unified description of the existing reality, leaving no room for understatement. It works great at the first stage of reconnaissance, i.e. identifying activities in the information space, as well as during attribution analysis, where it serves as a tool for describing characteristic and repeatable techniques that may be useful in identifying the author of an influence operation. Its advantage is the

³ <https://www.disarm.foundation/brief-history-of-disarm>

aforementioned compatibility with the STIX syntax, which allows it to be used on platforms such as Open CTI.

An example of DISARM use is a situation in which an analyst identifies a network of inauthentic accounts on a social networking site that spread the same meme that is supposed to legitimize a narrative that was previously present in another medium, e.g. an Internet portal. Thanks to the framework, you can specify, name and classify the techniques used, assign them to tactics and then pass on your information to another analyst who can further enrich the product as part of the intelligence cycle.

Limitations of the DISARM RED framework

The DISARM RED framework is a precise and useful tool, but you should be aware of its limitations. While it is useful in describing and reporting individual incidents in the information space, as well as classifying digital evidence obtained during OSINT investigations, it lacks elements that more precisely describe the psychological effects that a given activity has caused and is too far removed from the analysis models used in assessing psychological operations.

DISARM RED limits the description of psychological impact to a dozen or so techniques in the first phase - planning. The framework describes them as ways to achieve a given goal at the tactical level, when in reality the techniques mentioned above are both a tool and an end - included in a much wider range of psychological impact used by entities that are the attacking party in influence operations.

**Russian influence operation conducted in the information sphere
of UKRAINE: Creating a false image of Poland and the West
as an aggressor seeking to annex Ukrainian territories.**

**Analysis of the Russian influence operation conducted
in the information sphere of Ukraine according to
the DISARM RED v 1.6 framework**

Monitored period: October - December 2024

Monitored media: Internet portals, social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, X),
messaging (Telegram)

Introduction

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the Kremlin has consistently used disinformation as one of the key tools to "legitimize" its policy of aggression. Russian propaganda, especially in the context of the war in Ukraine, is based on a well-thought-out narrative structure aimed at manipulating recipients by mixing facts with fiction, emotional appeals, and creating a false historical background. The analysis reveals the current disinformation techniques and narrative mechanisms used in this particular infosphere. One of the latest examples is the widely spread narrative about alleged Western plans to divide Ukraine. The Russian propaganda apparatus continues its disinformation operation, the leading narratives of which are based on the theses of plans to annex Western Ukraine by Poland, Hungary, and Romania.

During the monitoring of media existing in Ukrainian infosphere, from October to December 2024, a coordinated effort was detected to spread a false narrative that Poland and other Western countries, mainly Hungary and Slovakia, are seeking to seize parts of Ukrainian lands. False information was spread in pro-Russian and directly Russian online media (RT, Sputnik - despite their delegitimization in Ukraine, they can still be easily

accessed), and popular Telegram channels, to a lesser extent on other social media platforms. The actions are a broad-based operation aimed at discrediting Poland, presenting it as an unreliable ally of Ukraine, and setting the Polish and Ukrainian nations at odds. The operation has a wide reach and is also visible in other countries, including Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt.

TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES USED ACCORDING TO DISARM v1.6:

PHASE	TACTICS	TECHNIQUE	DESCRIPTION
P01 - Plan	TA02 - Plan Objectives Presenting Poland as an unreliable ally of Ukraine and a threat to its statehood.	T0066 - Degrade Adversary	Russia uses narratives that present Poland in a bad light and damage its reputation.
		T0079 - Divide	Poland is presented as an aggressive and neo-imperialist country to create divisions and hatred of Poles in Ukrainian society.
		T0138 - Motivate to act	
		T0135 - Undermine	Provoking the belief that the aid is insincere and that Poland is ready to "stab Ukraine in the back".
P02 - Prepare	TA07 - Select Channels and Affordances	T0152.004 - Website Asset	Websites with Russian or pro-Russian affiliation (RT, Sputnik, News Front, Tsargrad.tv, Russkaya Vesna, Antifashist.com, Strana.ua,

			<p>Politnavigator.net or Ukraina.ru</p> <p>- for example:</p> <p>https://ukraina.ru/20240919/1057519352.html</p>
		T0151.004 - Chat Platform	<p>Telegram Messenger (e.g. the account "Mir Sewodnia z Yurii Podoliaka", which has several million followers and is one of the most popular channels in Ukraine, or channels such as "Zhensina z Kosoj", "Legitymnij", "Rezident" or "Tajnaja Kantselaria")</p>
		T0151.001 - Social Media Platform	<p>Social portals such as Facebook and Instagram</p>
		T0151.008 - Microblogging Platform	<p>Social media X (formerly Twitter)</p>
	TA14 - Develop Narratives	T0003 - Leverage Existing Narratives	<p>Promoting the thesis that Poland is seeking to revive the former Polish-Lithuanian</p>
		T0022 - Leverage Conspiracy Theory Narratives	<p>Commonwealth with the participation of external forces such as NATO and the US, which is supposed to lead to the</p>

			<p>realization of dreams of a lost empire.</p> <p>Claiming that Poles pose a threat to the security, existence, and national and religious identity of Ukrainians.</p> <p>Promoting false information about Polish territorial claims and the alleged "creeping annexation" of part of Ukraine by Poland.</p> <p>Belief that regardless of how the situation develops, Poland, with the support of the US, is pursuing its ambitions to occupy Western Ukraine.</p>
		T0068 - Respond to Breaking News Event or Active Crisis	Depending on current political events, Russia places false narratives in various communications.
	TA06 - Develop Content	T0023 - Distort Facts	

		T0085 - Develop Text-Based Content	Posting false textual content about Poland's plans to threaten Ukraine.
		T0086 - Develop Image-Based Content	Posting false maps depicting a divided Ukraine and the "zones of influence" of Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia.
	TA15 - Establish Assets	T0092 - Build Network	Distributing false, anti-Polish narratives using a network of websites, as well as Telegram accounts (anonymous and with established affiliation) and social media sites.
	TA16 - Establish Legitimacy	T0097.102 - Journalist Persona	Using a number of Telegram accounts claiming to be close to the Kremlin or the Ukrainian government.
		T0097.105 Military Personnel Persona	Accounts of Russian or formerly Ukrainian politicians used. Using accounts that describe themselves as "news".
		T0097.108 - Expert Persona	Referring to official sources, e.g. by quoting statements by Sergei Naryshkin - head of the
		T0097.111 - Government Official Persona	

		T0097.202 News Outlet Persona	Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation (SVR).
P03 - Execute	TA09 - Deliver Content	T0115 - Post Content	Placing false narratives in the form of posts on Telegram channels or other social media. Writing articles on Russian or pro-Russian websites that contain content consistent with anti-Polish narratives.
		T0116 - Comment or Reply on Content	Smuggling anti-Polish narratives in comments or replies to posts. An example is, for example, quoting posts from one pro-Russian channel on Telegram by another and adding your own commentary, which increases credibility and helps to hide the original source of the false narrative.
	TA17 - Maximise Exposure	T0119 - Cross-Posting	Publishing the same or very similar content on many different services, one popular combination is Telegram and X.

Summary

The influence operation conducted in the Ukrainian infosphere, which targets the image of Poland, has great potential to reach Ukrainian recipients. The techniques used, such as using multiple channels at once, amplifying the message through Telegram accounts with large reach, make it difficult to detect the original source of disinformation, and at the same time generate huge reach. The recipient has a real chance of encountering anti-Polish narratives, as the posts are shared many times and present on many different channels and websites at the same time.

The current version of this campaign suggests that Poland, Hungary, Romania and other Western countries are already "planning" to divide Ukraine into specific territories. By attributing alleged preparations for annexation to NATO, the propaganda attempts to discredit Western support for Ukraine and share these notions in disinformation about NATO's offensive plans. These messages are simultaneously used for propaganda activities that present Russia in the false light of a state defending itself, rather than attacking Ukraine by force (reverse logic strategy).

Russia consistently uses rhetoric comparing Ukraine and the West to Nazism. Such appeals are intended to provoke an emotional response and "legitimize" Russian disinformation about the aggression against Ukraine as a "denazification" operation or, more broadly, as a defensive operation against the West, suggesting that the West's actions are provocative and offensive in nature and lead to conflict.

Understanding these mechanisms allows not only for better analysis of propaganda, but also for more effective defense against it.

8. Case study - anti-Ukrainian narratives

Using false accounts to propagate anti-Ukrainian narratives using Telegram comments

Contemporary disinformation campaigns pose one of the most serious threats to information stability, especially in the context of geopolitical conflicts. Research conducted for the MUGA project shows the systematic use of social media platforms such as Telegram and Facebook to spread anti-Ukrainian narratives. The analysis shows how coordinated networks of inauthentic (false) accounts use manipulation techniques to destabilize Ukrainian society, weaken its morale, and reinforce Russian propaganda messages.

The work identified organized actions by malicious actors who use the comment sections of Telegram and Facebook to promote anti-Ukrainian narratives in Russian and Ukrainian language. The comments are designed to stir emotions and spread false information about the economic and social situation in Ukraine, which helps to demoralize citizens. These actions take the form of repeated claims, often stylized as voices of supposed members of local communities.

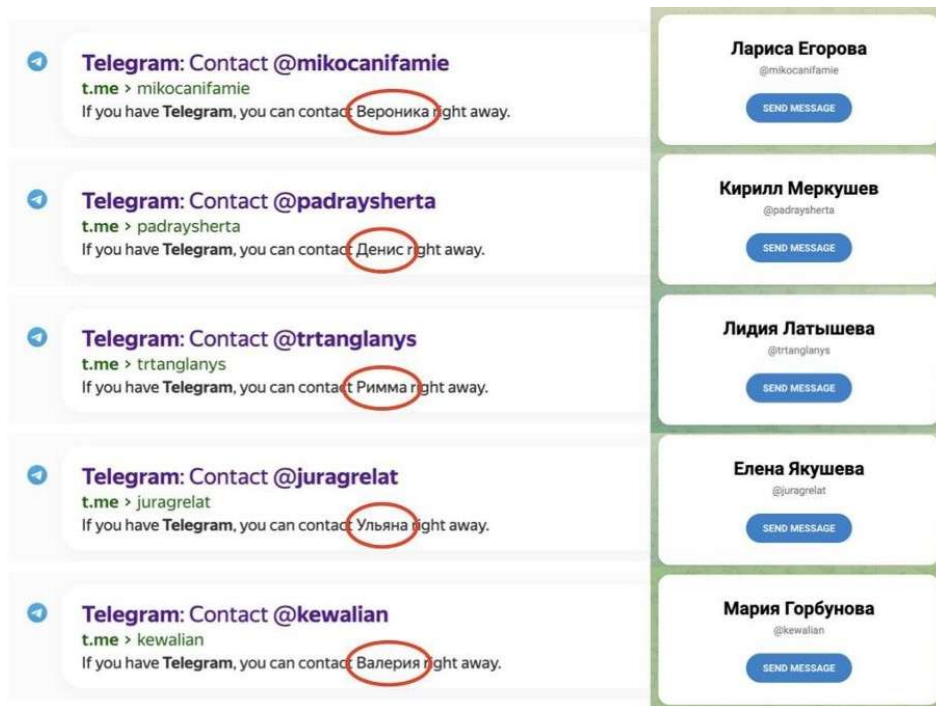
A key element is the publication of hostile comments from multiple profiles, ostensibly belonging to “ordinary” Ukrainians. This creates the illusion of authenticity and increases the credibility of the content in the eyes of the audience. As a result, narratives are being promoted that accuse the Ukrainian authorities of failures, glorify Russian “peace efforts” and undermine the leadership of President Volodymyr Zelensky. NATO, military mobilization and the refugee issue are also targeted by the campaign. Repetitive or identical messages appear simultaneously on multiple platforms, attacking the authority of the Ukrainian politicians and fueling pro-Russian propaganda.

Methodology

The study was based on tools that aggregate over 60 million comments from Telegram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube per month. Over 580,000 comments from October and November 2024 were analyzed, sent to OpenSearch to detect identical messages, unusual patterns or coordination between accounts. The analysis revealed deliberate cooperation of users engaged in repeated anti-Ukrainian messages.

Analysis

There were identified 15 accounts posting between 1,900 and 3,600 comments each over a three-month period, significantly exceeding the activity of regular bots. These accounts did not have real profile photos and their names changed multiple times, indicating deliberate manipulation. A distinctive feature was the mass repetition of content and coordinated responses to Telegram posts.



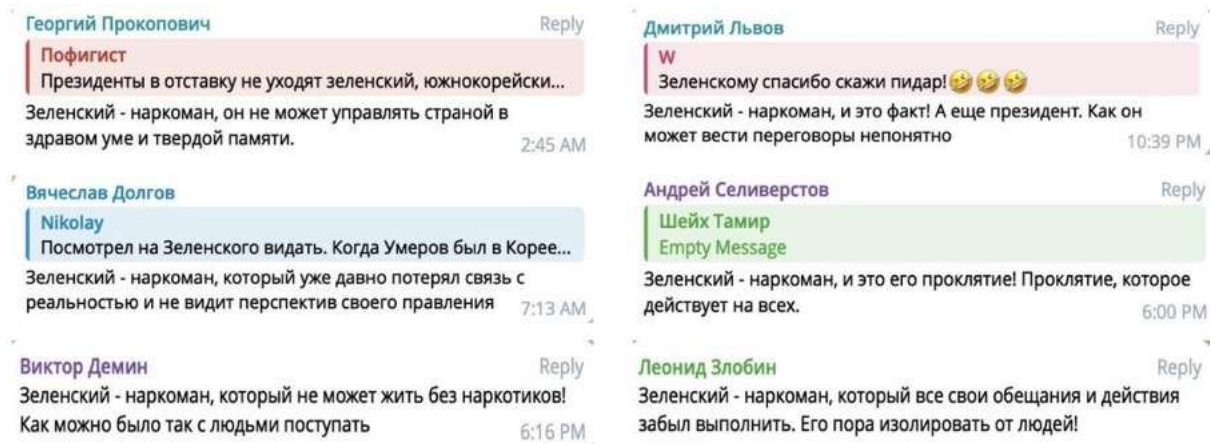
Yandex search results for the top five accounts by number of posts, all showing the old account names (on the left); Telegram accounts for the same accounts showing the current names (right)



Example of identical comments criticizing Volodymyr Zelensky from accounts with the top (@mikocanifamie/"Larisa Egorova") and third-top (@trtanganys/"Lidia Latysheva") number of comments in the dataset.

Hostile narratives about Ukrainian leadership

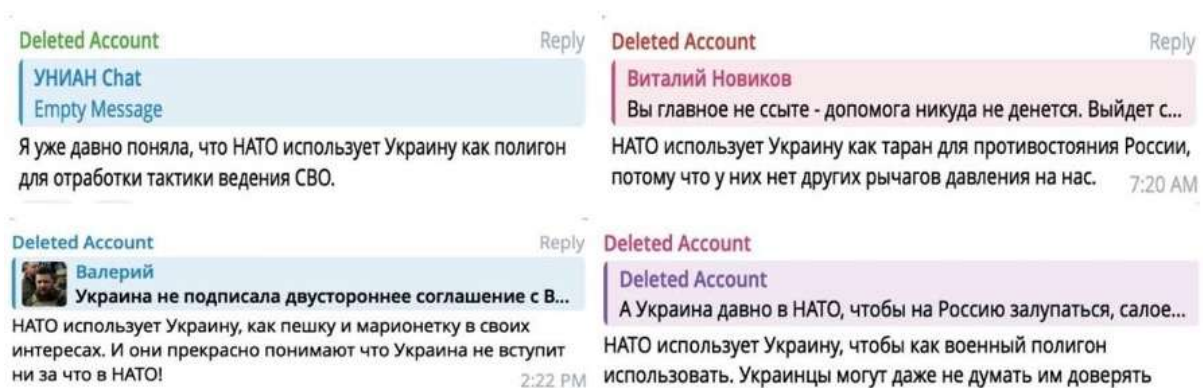
Unauthentic accounts regularly promoted accusations of President Zelensky's alleged drug addiction, with the aim of discrediting him in the eyes of the public. Identical phrases, often beginning with the words "Zelenskyy –" were repeated in many comments, suggesting his inability to rationally manage the country.



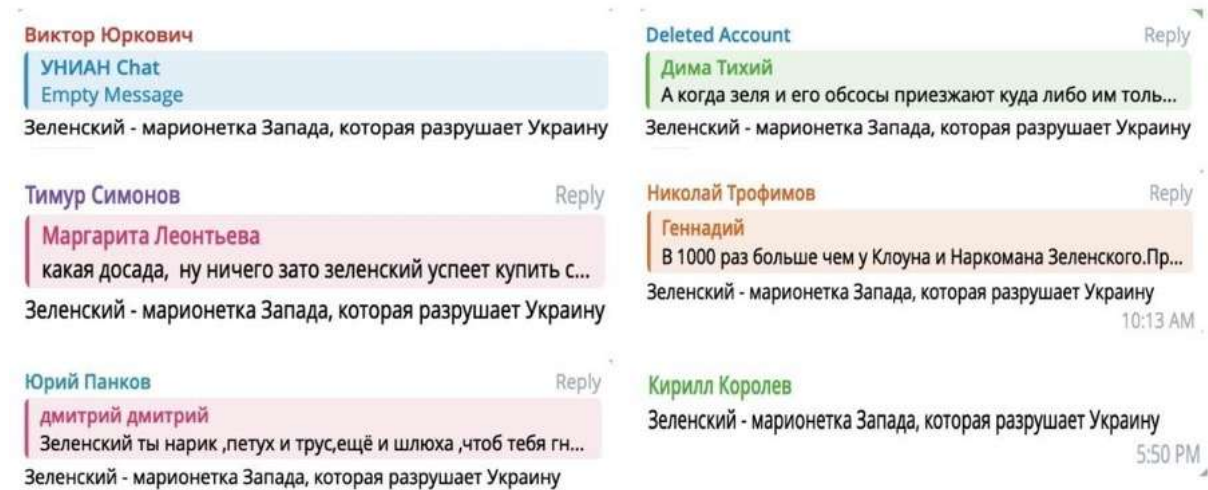
A collection of comments on President Zelensky's drug addiction published by accounts engaging in inauthentic behavior. (Sources: @genineneon/Telegram@feliciaaaaa_1991/Telegram, top right; @derinnnabou/Telegram, top left; @anahilldyrge/Telegram, middle left; @neberoosselsose/Telegram, middle right; bottom left; @ishlannnayel/Telegram, bottom right.)

Narratives accusing NATO

Some of the comments promoted the view that NATO was using Ukraine as a tool against Russia without offering real support. The posts appeared on accounts that were deleted shortly after publication, suggesting enforcement action by the platform or an attempt to cover their tracks.



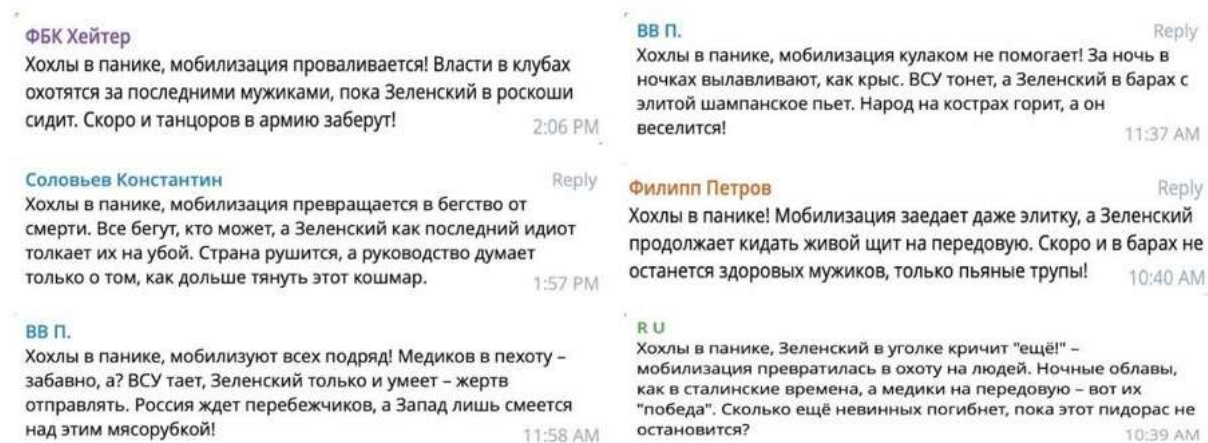
A collection of Telegram comments claiming that NATO is using Ukraine against Russia. Sources: Telegram, Telegram, top left; Telegram, top right; bottom left; Telegram, bottom right).



Identical comments claiming that Zelensky is a puppet of the West. (Sources: @irdrnalalose/Telegram, top left; Telegram (deleted account), top right; @celeronzaryur/Telegram, middle left; @varvelycoyalini/Telegram, middle right; @ampinainlv/Telegram, bottom left; @ovancesea/Telegram, bottom right).

Narratives about military mobilization

Comments about the mobilization emphasized uncertainty and the alleged expansion of conscription to new groups, including women. The comments reinforced doubts about the legality and sense of conducting military operations, often suggesting that the West was forcing Ukraine to continue fighting.



Comments about the failure of mobilization in Ukraine posted by accounts engaging in inauthentic behavior. (Sources: @actor_6485670158/Telegram, @actor_6880372649/Telegram, top left;

@Konst_Solivey/Telegram, middle left; @vvp_greater/Telegram@vvp_greater/Telegram, bottom left; , top right; @FilipPirtr/Telegram, middle right; , bottom right).

Narratives about refugees

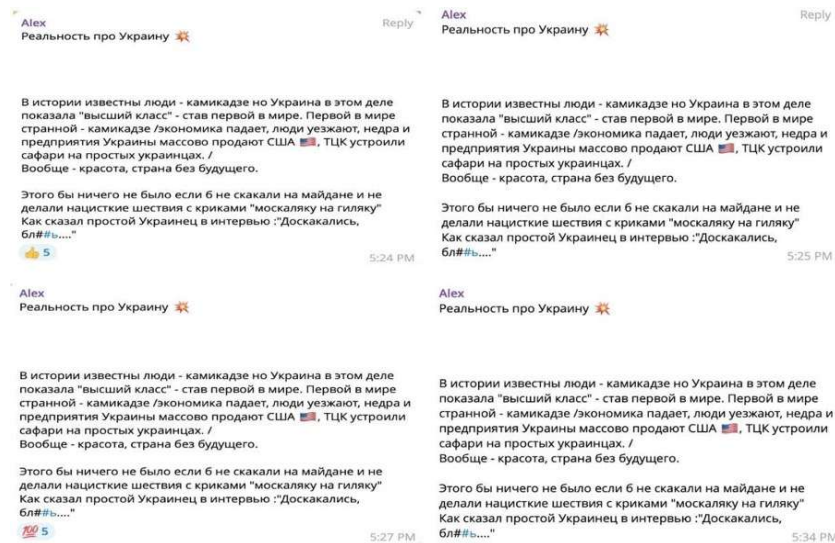
Here, the focus was on demographic problems and the alleged lack of willingness of refugees to return. The only solution emphasized was the one about concluding a peace agreement with Russia. The re-shared, nearly identical content appeared mainly on pro-Russian channels.



A collection of comments saying that the only way for Ukrainian refugees to return to the country was for President Zelensky to sign a peace agreement with Russia, posted by accounts engaged in inauthentic behavior (sources: @ormilananann/Telegram, top left; @aharorrololishna/Telegram, middle left; @blaeahali/Telegram, bottom left; @xarowrrh/Telegram, top right; deleted account/Telegram, middle right; @lereahouiefar/Telegram, bottom right).

Economic narratives

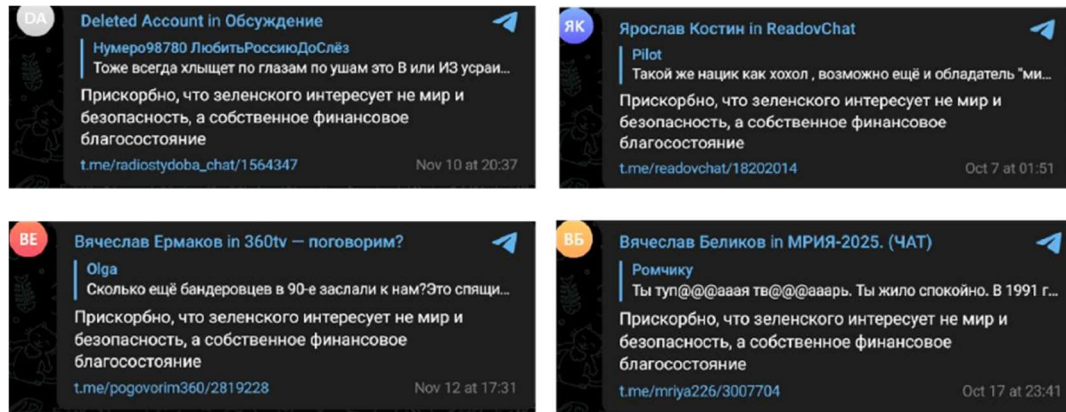
Disinformation messages painted Ukraine as a country on the verge of collapse, dependent on Western aid and struggling with labor shortages. This was contrasted with Russia's supposed stability, suggesting that sanctions were not working. Massively replicated comments were posted in rapid succession across multiple groups.



A collection of comments about the social breakdown in Ukraine posted by an account engaging in inauthentic behavior. (Telegram, Telegram, top left; Telegram, top right; bottom left; bottom right)

Narratives about peace talks and the continuing armed conflict

A recurring theme was the Ukrainian authorities' alleged reluctance to negotiate. The comments suggested that Zelensky was putting financial gain ahead of the country's well-being. Many of them focused on pro-Russian channels, seeking to undermine trust in the Ukrainian leadership.



A set of four identical comments saying "It is unfortunate that Zelensky is not interested in peace or security, but in his own financial well-being" on Russian Telegram channels in response to other comments. User comments from October to November 2024. (Sources: Telegram, Telegram, top left; Telegram, top right; Telegram, bottom left; Telegram, bottom right).

Bot and troll accounts

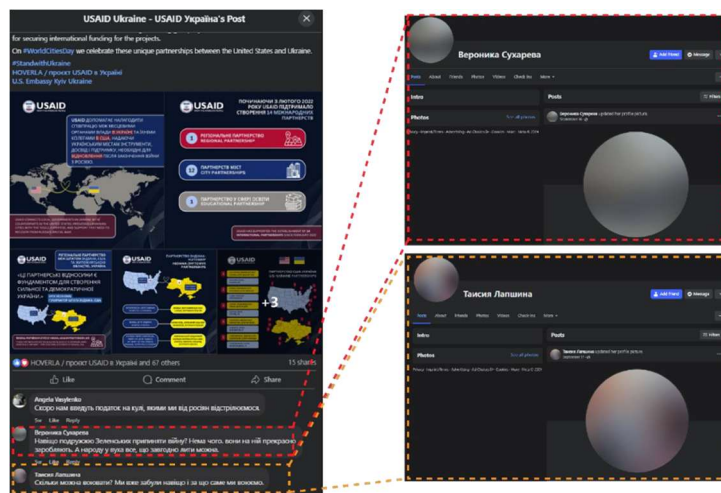
A number of actors copied identical content regardless of the main topic of discussion, indicating a coordinated campaign. Bots and trolls appeared *en masse* under posts on different channels, amplifying the main pro-Russian messages.



A composite image of a post in the Telegram channel "Military Notes - What's New in the World" (left) and comments posted under the publication (center and right). The different messages are highlighted in boxes, and the number corresponds to the number of times we identified the exact message being reused, including punctuation and emoticons (Source: Military Notes - What's in the world).

Narratives about NATO and US motivations in Facebook comments

The comments in the analyzed set often put blame for the war on NATO and the United States, emphasizing alleged Western interests at Ukraine's expense. There were repeated accusations that Kyiv authorities had "sold out" society for their own financial gain. The fake accounts, created in September 2024, posted the same comments multiple times under different posts, reinforcing doubts about the wisdom of continued military and political support for Ukraine.



Composite image of a USAID Ukraine Facebook post (left) and profiles of two bot-like accounts (top and bottom right) (Sources: USAID Ukraine, , Lapshina, left; Veronika Sukharevau, top right; Taisia, bottom right)

9. Recommendations

Summary of the information environment and psychological sensitivities

Since the Russian invasion in 2022, Ukraine's information environment has undergone an intensive transformation. Public media such as UA:Pershyi and Suspilne play key roles, as do digital social media platforms such as Facebook and Telegram, which support organization of activities and exposing disinformation. At the same time, informal communication channels are becoming increasingly important, which, although fast, are susceptible to manipulation.

Ukrainian society is characterized by heightened emotionality and psychological sensitivity, especially to crisis information, which increases susceptibility to disinformation. Despite the growing trust in state institutions thanks to consolidated media coverage, there is still a need to strengthen the transparency and independence of information sources.

Russia remains the main actor destabilizing Ukraine's information environment through disinformation, cyberattacks, and psychological operations. Pro-Russian narratives, reinforced by fear-mongering campaigns, aim to weaken public morale and undermine international support for Ukraine.

Strategic actions should include strengthening independent public media, educating society about media literacy, and strengthening international cooperation in cybersecurity and countering disinformation. Monitoring and responding to Russian interference activities, including sanctions against their organizers, is also crucial. These steps are essential to increase Ukraine's information resilience and protecting its social stability.

a) Strategic analysis - the impact of the situation in the region on Poland's strategic goals

In Polish-Ukrainian relations, Russia's disinformation activities remain a key challenge, causing social tensions. Russian narratives exploit, among others, historical tensions, e.g. the Volhynia issue, and narratives undermining mutual trust. Internal differences in the perception of support additionally hinder cooperation, requiring actions to strengthen positive relations. Priority areas of cooperation include regional security, where coordination in the field of defense and cybersecurity is necessary, and energy, including joint infrastructure projects. Joint promotion of history and culture can be an effective response to destabilizing propaganda narratives.

Strengthening strategic cooperation will bring both countries tangible benefits, such as strengthening Poland's position as a leader in the region and increasing the economic and political stability of Ukraine. Joint actions to counter disinformation will allow both countries to respond more effectively to Russia's hybrid threats. Deepening diplomatic cooperation, developing joint projects in NATO and the EU, and investing in social and cultural exchange programs are key to achieving these goals. Establishing a center to counter disinformation and strengthening independent public media will be the foundation of the information resilience of both countries. Strategic strengthening of Polish-Ukrainian relations, based on multidimensional cooperation and responding to information threats, will contribute to increased stability in the region and strengthening the position of both countries in the international arena.

b) Training

Based on the observations and conclusions contained in the report, the following actions are justified. These actions should be taken in the main academic institutions in different parts of Ukraine, with different sensitivities to Russian propaganda, taking into account a plan to expand activities in the future to other regions and adapted all the actions to specificity and sensitivity of each Ukrainian region.

1. Information environment security training

Scope: DISARM model, detection of external interference operations FIMI, fact-checking.

Justification: Raising competences in identifying and neutralizing disinformation operations strengthens Ukraine's ability to protect its information sphere.

2. Media education and critical thinking

Scope: Methods of recognizing false content, analysis of information sources, practical workshops.

Justification: Shaping a critical approach to the media among various social groups increases resilience of society to information manipulation.

3. Workshops on the use of artificial intelligence

Scope: Safe use of AI in social media, threats related to deepfakes, tools for detecting manipulation.

Justification: Given the growing use of AI in disinformation, it is necessary to equip participants with knowledge on how to recognize and counteract threats.

4. Creating and promoting educational materials

Scope: Developing leaflets, codes of good practices, multimedia materials.

Justification: High-quality materials support educational activities and increase their reach in local communities.

5. Designing a long-term strategy to counter disinformation

Scope: Creating action plans, monitoring effectiveness, engaging various stakeholder groups.

Justification: Strategic planning ensures the sustainability of activities and the ability to respond to new challenges.

6. Launching a media project

Scope: Promoting good practices in information security, monitoring disinformation campaigns.

Justification: The media project increases public awareness and builds an environment conducive to the dissemination of true information.

c) Implementation

The following actions are justified by the observations and conclusions contained in the report:

1. Visit of the bidder's representatives to Ukraine

Justification: Direct involvement of experts and researchers on site allows for a better understanding of the specifics of the local information environment, identification of key challenges and establishment of relationships with locals. Physical presence strengthens trust and builds the credibility of the project.

2. Conference presenting the report

Justification: Public presentation of the report with the participation of local partners and national and international experts increases its visibility and reinforces the importance of the issues raised in it. The conference provides an opportunity to exchange experiences and obtain comments that can be taken into account in further activities.

3. Development of guidelines and best practices

Justification: Working with a local partner allows for adapting global solutions to the specifics of local challenges. Guidelines and good practices created together have a greater chance of acceptance and implementation by local communities.

4. Development and implementation of classes with students

Justification: Educating young people increases their resistance to disinformation and strengthens their critical thinking skills. Cooperation with local partners enables better adjustment of educational materials to local needs.

5. Creation of a communication and mentoring channel

Justification: Networking of project participants with the bidder allows for a continuous flow of knowledge and support. Mentoring increases the effectiveness of implemented activities and enables their adaptation to changing conditions.

6. Civic and media education on disinformation

Justification: Development and implementation of educational materials (e.g. leaflets, codes of good practice, AI guidelines) increases public awareness and builds the capacity of local communities to respond to disinformation. Such initiatives enable local actors to formulate expectations towards legislators.

7. Development of a long-term strategy

Justification: After the end of the grant project, it is necessary to maintain the effects and continue the activities. The strategy should include recommendations on financing, partnerships and further education, which will ensure the sustainability of the achieved results.

d) Information activities

Information and educational activities are a key element in countering disinformation and building public resilience to information manipulation. The main goal of these activities is to widely disseminate knowledge about the impact of disinformation campaigns and promote best practices in information security. The project plans to implement comprehensive activities targeted at various audiences, such as decision-makers, experts, journalists, influencers, opinion leaders, academic and research communities,

and non-governmental organizations in Ukraine, Poland, and the broader European context.

The first step will be to launch a media project that will serve as a platform for promoting best practices in information security and warning against the most important disinformation campaigns identified in Ukraine. This project will include the creation and distribution of information materials, such as reports, analyses, infographics, podcasts, and videos, tailored to the specific needs of each target group. The use of social media and collaboration with local and international media outlets will also be a key element, allowing for reaching a broad audience, both locally and globally. The information activities will be complemented by educational campaigns aimed at building public awareness of the impact of disinformation on regional security and stability. A key aspect will be educating the public on the mechanisms of disinformation and the tools that enable its identification and counteraction. The planned campaigns will include practical workshops for journalists, opinion leaders, and academics, during which participants will have the opportunity to gain knowledge on detecting false content, analyzing information sources, and safely using artificial intelligence techniques in the media environment.

Particular attention will be paid to strengthening social resilience to disinformation in regions of Ukraine particularly vulnerable to the influence of propaganda campaigns. Through local partnerships and tailoring activities to the specific needs of each region, the project will contribute to raising awareness among residents and enhancing their ability to respond to disinformation. A key element of these activities will be the engagement of local opinion leaders and non-governmental organizations, which will enable the creation of lasting structures supporting social resilience.

An important aspect of the information and educational activities will also be their international dimension. Reports and materials prepared as part of the project will be available in English, enabling their use in the broader European information sphere. This will contribute to increasing awareness of Russian disinformation and psychological operations in EU countries, which in turn will strengthen international support for Ukraine and commitment to countering shared threats.

These activities, combined with the implementation of educational and media tools and close cooperation with local and international partners, aim not only to counter current disinformation campaigns, but also to build long-term societal and systemic resilience to information manipulation, contributing to increased information security in the region.

e) R&D Development

The development of research and innovation (R&D) in the area of countering disinformation and information and psychological operations (FIMI) is crucial to strengthening Ukraine's information resilience. Russia's disinformation strategy relies on advanced technologies such as content automation and the use of artificial intelligence, which requires effective and modern countermeasures. Investments in R&D can strengthen both Ukraine's defense capabilities and its leadership in countering disinformation in the region.

A key R&D priority should be developing technologies that enable the automatic identification, analysis, and neutralization of disinformation content. The use of artificial intelligence and machine learning can accelerate the process of detecting false narratives and mapping their dissemination networks. AI-based analytical platforms could enable ongoing monitoring of the information environment and generate recommendations for corrective action. The development of fact-checking tools should include both applications for professional journalists and easily accessible tools for citizens. Using blockchain technology allows for the creation of transparent fact-checking systems that will increase public trust in reliable sources. Such tools could also be integrated with popular social media platforms to quickly verify content in real time.

This R&D should also include interdisciplinary research on the mechanisms by which disinformation influences social and political behavior. Collaboration between psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, and technology specialists can provide comprehensive knowledge on the effects of information manipulation. The results of this

research will be helpful in designing more effective information campaigns and educational programs. Cybersecurity is a key element in countering FIMI operations. The development of critical infrastructure protection systems, especially digital media and state institutions, will reduce the risk of cyberattacks and information sabotage. Investments in encryption, network monitoring, and incident response technologies will enhance Ukraine's defense capabilities against threats.

The creation of specialized research and development centers focused on countering disinformation and FIMI operations will consolidate knowledge and technological resources. These centers could operate in cooperation with international partners such as NATO and the EU, ensuring access to best practices and the latest technologies. International cooperation in R&D is crucial for effectively countering global disinformation campaigns. Joint research projects with the EU, the US, and Canada can provide access to advanced technologies, funding, and expertise. Ukraine could also become a regional leader in countering disinformation education and technology, promoting its solutions in neighboring countries. Investing in the education of media, information technology, and social psychology specialists is also essential for developing capabilities in countering disinformation. Scholarship programs and training in collaboration with universities and international organizations will enable the development of highly qualified personnel capable of carrying out advanced research projects and implementing innovative solutions.

Developing R&D in the area of countering disinformation and FIMI is an investment in Ukraine's information security. The combination of advanced technologies, interdisciplinary research, and international cooperation will effectively address information threats and strengthen Ukraine's position as a regional leader in the fight against disinformation.